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The American Experience



Approaches to the Study of the United States

Edited by Hennig Cohen

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THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

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Dr. S. C. Bhattacharya.
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INTRODUCTION

This is one of two volumes each bearing the modest sub-title *Approaches to the Study of the United States*. Taken together these two volumes represent in approximately 800 pages a distillation of the best writing which has appeared over the past twenty years in the scholarly periodical called *American Quarterly*. *American Quarterly* today is one of the leading journals in the United States for the publication of interdisciplinary scholarship dealing with American subject matter. When it was founded in 1949 at the University of Minnesota it was the only one.

The term "interdisciplinary" applied to such studies has generated more dispute both in the United States and abroad than is warranted by so innocuous a word. Applied to the kind of scholarship found here it means either an essay based upon the methodology of one discipline which has something to say to scholars in other disciplines, or it means the use of techniques of a discipline applied to materials not commonly touched by the practitioners of that discipline. For example, a study of literature may have wide implications for historians, for political scientists, for psychologists, even for anthropologists. At the same time, the techniques of analysis developed by students of literature may have relevance not only to literary masterpieces but also to school textbooks, to popular literature, and even to films.

Historians, especially those concerned with intellectual and cultural history, have always known that the materials of their study may come from various levels of the society they are investigating, ranging from public pronouncements of high dignity to ephemeral documents that society may preserve only by chance. An editorial on crumbling newsprint may be more significant of a people's aspirations than a proclamation inscribed on vellum. Moreover, as anthropologists and sociologists have shown us, evidence for understanding the deepest nature of a people may depend less on documents than it does upon events or artifacts or even significant gestures. Culturally, Caesar's crossing that trivial stream the Rubicon is more significant than his book on the *Gallic Wars*.

Once it is accepted that American culture does have unique and definable contours, however much these may owe to their European antecedents, then it becomes intelligible to approach the study of American culture by whatever tools the various disciplines have devised. In short, the aim of American Studies is to record and understand the American experience

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with the same thoroughness and completeness that is brought to the study of antiquity by the long tradition of classical studies. Far from blunting the impact of masterpieces or dimming the glory of great events, such study can only reveal more clearly the peaks of human achievement by displaying them against the topography from which they arose.

Much attention has been given by the practitioners of American Studies themselves to their motives for embarking on this new approach to American subject matter. Beginning as it did shortly after the conclusion of World War II, one motivation surely derived from the increased awareness in the United States of America's place in world affairs. At the same time this awareness early led to the realization that such studies could become unwholesomely nationalistic and ethnocentric. Much of the early writing in this field was deliberately addressed to such issues. If the whole question seems quaintly innocent today it is, perhaps, because self-knowledge in nations is no less needful than self-knowledge in men. Meanwhile, whatever understanding the Americans achieved of themselves is equally available to others who need or want to understand them, and, such are the built-in advantages of cultural distance, it seems likely that even more significant contributions in American Studies someday will be made by scholars who are not themselves Americans.

Another motive, especially among the younger scholars who took up such studies, was their dissatisfaction with what they had come to conceive of as the narrowness of the disciplines they had been trained in—the excessive concern with political or diplomatic or economic history among historians, the excessive concern for thematic analysis and the analysis of imagery among scholars of literature, for example. Historians unwilling to believe that the exchange of diplomatic notes couched in archaic language constitutes the life of nations, and students of literature impatient with the tendency of some of their colleagues to reduce the expression of man's grander passions to one of seven kinds of ambiguity flocked to what came to be called the American Studies "movement". Political scientists, economists, sociologists, cultural anthropologists, folklorists, and musicologists contributed when they had something to say of relevance to other disciplines. If they felt less need to join a movement it must have been because their disciplines were not as intellectually dessicated as those of literature and history.

And a third motive, that has turned out to be more specious than real, was the assumed relationship of American Studies with area studies devoted to other parts of the world, which also were booming in post-war America. In practice, area studies have proved to be a pedagogical device for giving generalists a sampling of the knowledge derived by many disciplines for the sake of equipping them to carry out practical but non-specialist work in

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relation to that area. Area studies have not been a means of advancing knowledge itself.

For practical considerations, American Studies indeed might be used as an area studies approach for students who are not themselves natives of the United States. Yet, since there has been so little pedagogical interest in this kind of study outside the United States, American Studies can hardly be said to have become an area studies form of education at all. Rather, most of the interest and the bulk of the scholarship have been American, and the Americans themselves have been acutely aware that they are treating only a limited segment of the total American experience.

It is for this reason perhaps that American Studies in the United States has proved to be more exciting intellectually than pedagogically. It is true that numerous American universities today offer programs called American Studies—including the University of Pennsylvania, which became the home of *American Quarterly* in 1951—but few of these programs make any serious attempt to cross over disciplinary lines in teaching. Generally a program is made up of courses from the standard disciplines, each taught by a specialist in his field, with perhaps a terminal seminar in which students and faculty together attempt to synthesize in their minds what never was synthesized in the classroom. Far more intellectually exciting has been the scholarship such as that reprinted in these two volumes.

We in India associate the plural verb with American studies not merely because of a preference for British usage, but also because there has never been a similar attempt in India to view the subject matter of the United States from such various angles of vision—nor is there likely to be in the immediate future. The study of American literature and of American history grows apace in the Indian universities (to a lesser extent, politics and economics) and is coming to be accompanied by a respectable body of scholarship. It is for Indian teachers to decide whether such interdisciplinary materials as those represented here would be useful in their teaching. Given the rigidity of the syllabus at most universities, it is unlikely that such materials can ever have widespread classroom utility, though they may make fructifying reading for both faculty and advanced students.

Scholarship, however, is another matter. It is hoped that Indian scholars in various fields will find articles in these books of interest to them. It is hoped that some at least will be encouraged to take up research of this nature. Gaining access to materials for research is a perennial problem for the Indian scholar interested in the United States. These essays will suggest, though, that research does not wholly depend on reading manuscripts in a depository, interviewing public figures in Washington, or polling opinion at obscure crossroads—all of them half a world away. Often materials already available are overlooked by scholars who do not cast their

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nets widely enough or are discarded by those lacking the intellectual daring to strike out on paths of their own. In this, as in other fields, Indian scholarship will reach full maturity when Indian scholars stop fretting about how foreigners would have dealt with their topic and deal with it in their own way. Not least among the gainers will be the foreign scholars who read their work.

This volume, *The American Experience,* begins with a section devoted to the central problem of American Studies (What *is* American about the American experience?) and concludes with a section devoted to the central problem of this line of investigation (Should interdisciplinary studies have their own methodology?). Between are sections making use of the materials of history, literature, political science, international relations, and a group of essays devoted to that unique American hero, the cowboy, who has come to fill an emotional need of other nations as well. An analysis of both the theory and practice of these essays fails to reveal any one pervasive technique common to all the authors beyond a quickness of sensibility and a liveliness of mind. American Studies cannot claim a monopoly on such blithe spirits, but the fact that as a field of research it has attracted the interest of such persons, and continues to attract them, says much for its strength and vitality.

Charles Boewe, *Director*

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION v

Defining the National Character

DAVID RIESMAN "Psychological Types and National Character: An Informal Commentary" 1

CARL N. DEGLER "The Sociologist as Historian: Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*" 20

CUSHING STROUT "The Sun Also Sets: A Note on Degler, Riesman and Tocqueville" 35

WILLIAM G. MCLOUGHLIN "Pietism and the American Character" 39

EVERETT S. LEE "The Turner Thesis Re-examined" 64

DAVID BRION DAVIS "Some Ideological Functions of Prejudice in Ante-Bellum America" 72

A Problem: The Use of the Past

WARREN I. SUSMAN "History and the American Intellectual: Uses of a Usable Past" 84

LOUIS D. RUBIN JR. "Tom Sawyer and the Use of Novels" 106

FREDERICK J. HOFFMAN "Philistine and Puritan in the 1920s: An Example of the Misuse of the American Past" 115

A Theme: Innocence, Adolescence, Experience

IHAB H. HASSAN "The Idea of Adolescence in American Fiction" 134

ANNETTE K. BAXTER "Archetypes of American Innocence: Lydia Blood and Daisy Miller" 148

JAMES F. SCOTT "Beat Literature and the American Teen Cult" 157

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DAVID W. NOBLE "Cooper, Leatherstocking and the Death of the American Adam" 169

A Political Movement: Progressivism

DAVID W. NOBLE "The Paradox of Progressive Thought" 184

RICHARD K. HOFSTADTER "Beard and the Constitution: The History of an Idea" 197

JOHN C. BURNHAM "Psychiatry, Psychology and the Progressive Movement" 216

RICHARD • BEATRICE K. HOFSTADTER "Winston Churchill: A Study in the Popular Novel" 226

A Hero: The Cowboy

DAVID BRION DAVIS "Ten-Gallon Hero" 244

PHILIP DURHAM "The Negro Cowboy" 259

MODY C. BOATRIGHT "The American Rodeo" 270

Angles of Vision: America at Home and Abroad

ERIC L. MCKITRICK • STANLEY ELKINS "Institutions in Motion" 280

FRANK THISTLETHWAITE "The Citadel and the Caravan: Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century" 290

CHARLES E. SHAIN "The English Novelists and the American Civil War" 302

OLIVER W. LARKIN "Two Yankee Painters in Italy: Thomas Cole and Samuel Morse" 325

DAVID STRAUSS "French Critics and American Jazz" 331

Toward Method

HENRY NASH SMITH "Can 'American Studies' Develop a Method?" 338

JOHN HIGHAM "American Intellectual History: A Critical Appraisal" 350

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MARCUS CUNLIFFE "American Watersheds" 366

BERNARD BOWRON • LEO MARX • ARNOLD ROSE "Literature and Covert Culture" 381

RICHARD E. SYKES "American Studies and the Concept of Culture: A Theory and Method" 392

RICHARD L. MERRITT "The Emergence of American Nationalism: A Quantitative Approach" 411

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THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Approaches to the Study of the United States

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Defining the National Character

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Psychological Types and National Character:

AN INFORMAL COMMENTARY

IN 1880 JOHN FISKE GAVE A SERIES OF LECTURES BEFORE THE ROYAL INSTITUTE, on "American Political Ideas," in which he prophesied that the English-speaking people would, within a few centuries, cover Africa with teeming cities, railroads and telegraphs, this being the manifest destiny of the race. Such unreflective ethnocentrism, such complacency about urban, industrial society is very much muted today among people of Fiske's distinction; it is often from the less industrialized countries, now undergoing urbanization, that such sentiments come. A good deal of what I have to say will be a tribute, if at times a qualified and critical one, to the work American anthropologists have done in challenging Western ethnocentrism, in helping us to appreciate the values of other, quite different cultures.

We have to keep reminding ourselves how widespread were various forms of racist thinking among well-informed and humane people until very recent times. In his book on *Social Darwinism in America*, Richard Hofstadter calls to our attention the once-reputed book, *Applied Eugenics*, by Paul Popenoe and Roswell H. Johnson, a book which viewed city people as pathological and recommended a return to rural living to counteract the dysgenic effects of urbanization. Eugenics is, *par excellence*, the application to modern city populations of rural attitudes towards livestock — an inherently aristocratic bias towards "breeding" and "bloodlines." Typically, the eugenicist engages in a monstrous game of science-fiction, in which he dreams of breeding humans for "quality" as if we had decided once and for all what human qualities were worth preserving. (Having had some experience as an amateur dairy farmer, I know it is no simple matter even to breed Jersey cows for quality, since a tussle always goes on between efficient milk and cream production per se and a

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variety of aesthetic standards, originally brought over from England, not to mention a further consideration of whether the cow is pleasant to deal with or not!)

I bring up these bits of intellectual history because they give point to the misgivings which many people feel about scientific study of the differences between national groups. For example, my ethically sensitive colleague, Margaret Mead (to whom I would like especially to pay tribute, for I have learned so very much from her work), has expressed in conversation her judgment that at this historic moment it is unstrategic to emphasize the constitutional or biological differences among peoples, lest this be an invitation to a renewed scientistic racism or some malignant program of eugenics. Anthropologists have been among the most valiant and capable in the battle against racism; and Margaret Mead among them is quite understandably wary of work that would classify people by their hereditary endowment.

It is considerations of this sort that compel us as social scientists to anticipate the consequences of our discoveries (including terminological ones), much as the theoretical physicists were compelled by the atom bomb into a sudden consciousness of human chain reactions. The bomb has a very immediate real effect; it quite obviously increases the offensive and destructive power of even a tiny handful of men — the sky now seems to be the limit. But I think the two situations are, fortunately, not comparable. The demagogue hardly needs the social scientist's assistance in making use of the visible or invisible differences among people for bellicose ends. While of course gangsters with ideas are more dangerous than gangsters without them, there are plenty of explosive ideas around, and men manipulated other men before modern social scientists or even Machiavelli wrote their books.

I say all this is fortunate for the practicing social scientist, because I don't want us to become any more influential than we are, lest out of piety and politics we might censor our curiosities. I am inclined to think that we are not going to add appreciably to the evil in the world, or to the good, whatever we do, and so we can safely get on with our work — wherever our curiosity leads us. Just as I don't like to hear novelists and poets being asked to be "constructive," or to take their places in the war of ideas, so I resent it when even from the best of motives the ivory tower is converted into a battlement. To be sure, my faith in the long-run healing qualities of knowledge is perhaps unfounded: Aldous Huxley and George Orwell and a number of other gifted anti-utopians have tried to talk such people as me out of this Enlightenment prejudice. . . .

Indeed, where concepts are "used" in the study of national character,

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with some ideological bias, by scientists who should know better — I am angered. During the last World War, it seemed to me that for psychiatrists to speak of "the" Germans as paranoid — or even as authoritarian — was to enlist science in the service of chauvinism. I wondered whether people who talked about "the" Germans in this way were sure they could sacrifice themselves to an unheralded martyrdom if they had the bad luck to live in a totalitarian regime. And I have wondered, too, if America was so free of sadists and politically neutral organizers as to make us so sure "it couldn't happen here," given the social and economic disorganization and the international assistance Hitler had in coming to power, especially from the German Communist Party. On such occasions, I ask myself whether the concept of national character (as distinguished from casual conversation about, let us say, "Germanic" intellectual traditions) had not better be left wholly out of the scientific vocabulary, lest pretentious support be given to racist and nationalist name-calling.

But what has greatly encouraged me as to the possibilities of pursuing such work in a detached and scientific spirit are the publications which Ruth Benedict, Geoffrey Gorer, and Margaret Mead turned out during World War II on the national character of enemies and allies. For instance, Ruth Benedict's book on Japanese culture, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, persuasively testifies to the objectivity with which trained anthropologists can pursue applied research. In this connection, we should notice one very important semantic point. The psychiatrist Brickner called his war-time book in which he compared the Germans to paranoid patients, *Is Germany Incurable?* Anthropologists, however, tend to avoid such nouns as "Germany" or "Japan" or "France," and to substitute their term, "culture," for older terms like "nation" or "people." In fact, whether we think of culture with the little "c" of the anthropologist or with the big "C" of the humanist, as long as we don't use the capital "K" of *Kultur*, the overtones are neutral ones; the phrase "German culture" carries hardly any of the freight of "the German nation," or "the Germans," let alone the phrase "Imperial Germany" which Veblen used in his caustic World War I tract for the times. If I am right, this is some testimony to the way the term "culture" in the proper context serves already to objectify group relations; it imports an unindignant attitude, if not necessarily an unevaluative one.

To be sure, there are pitfalls in applying the term "culture" to a national group: can one, for example, speak of national cultures at all in a modern industrial state, or should one speak only of the cultures of the several social strata which transcend national boundaries? It is often said

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that a burger of Lyons is closer in type to a burger of Bremen or Buffalo than any of them is to a factory worker in his own country. Likewise, there are those who believe that the lower-middle class is the same nasty creation of urban life and capitalism wherever one goes, all that changes being language and a few incidental customs. Obviously, the ghost of Marx stalks such controversies, as well as the ghosts of Gobineau and Mazzini and other vicious or amiable nineteenth-century nationalists. To put such ghosts to work rather than leave them free to haunt us, I would like to see studies of national and class character done comparatively from a number of different vantage points. Let those who assume the homogeneity of the lower-middle class everywhere in the Western world see what they can do with the assumption, as contrasted with alternative assumptions. Certainly, Lloyd Warner's work in this country is an effort to study class as culture, though in terms of life-style rather than simply of market and industry relations, and in terms of the cross-cultural tugs within an individual who moves from one class-culture to another. And studies such as those of Jurgen Ruesch, Martin B. Loeb and co-workers, on the several illness-styles of the different social classes in America invite cross-national comparisons in order to see whether or not there is a lower-middle-class backache and an upper-middle-class allergy in Milan as in San Francisco.

Elaine Bell has reminded me of the wonderful gambit in Stephen Potter's *Gamesmanship:* "But what of the South?" — a gambit no less applicable to Italy, France, or China than to the United States. There are regional cultures, social-class cultures, religious-enclave cultures, even "family cultures," where the family makes the same impress on its members that Harvard or Yale are said to do. The problem, in other words, is not "culture" per se — a term whose proliferating meanings Kroeber and Kluckhohn have recently tried to analyze and organize — but rather which aspects of culture are relevant for which specific problems. In the present state of our knowledge, the question must remain open whether each nation has a "national character," in terms of any significant variables, but our common sense tells us that we shall find differences — significant for certain problems if not for others — as we cross national boundaries.

Where national and ethnic groups nearly coincide (as racial ideologists have so often sought to force them to do), the differences can be striking enough — as we can see by analogy within our own country. Thus, the difference between a Methodist accountant in a Wichita bank, earning say $4,000 a year, and a Jewish liquor salesman in Brooklyn, earning the same, is likely to be at least as great as the different cookeries they favor. And both will differ markedly from a Greek restaurant owner in

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South Bend, worried about the good name and appropriate dowry for his teen-age daughter. All three will differ from an Irish Catholic supervisor in a utilities company office in Boston — and so we could go on at the $4,000 meridian and find substantial difference even among people all of whom admire Jack Benny, enjoy baseball, and drive 1950 Chevrolets.

In fact, our ideology of tolerance and our assumption that the melting pot would serve to boil away these differences have prevented us from giving them sufficient academic attention — it goes without saying that they have had a great deal of lay attention, not all of it friendly. The brilliant voting studies of Samuel Lubell, reported in *The Future of American Politics*, came as a reminder that ethnic groups persist in this country even to the fourth and fifth generation, particularly so if it becomes the interest of some political machine to recreate them. In the southern counties of Illinois there are people of German descent who have lived there for a hundred years, and have, so far as the eye can see, become fully "Americanized." Their children attend American high schools, intermarry with Scotch-Irish and other stocks; German is not spoken or German culture recalled. Yet many of these families, life-long Democrats, voted for Willkie on the war issue. And they bring up their daughters to serve their future husbands blood sausage and like solid fare if they should marry a family of German ancestry, while also teaching them the salads and other dishes appropriate to entertaining the ladies' club of Cairo or Carbondale — dishes that may also be appropriate at home if they should marry a non-German boy.

If we look at the Germans and Jews in America, not to speak of Poles, Italians, and Czechs, it seems as if the closer we get to One World in the international area, the less homogenized is the product of the melting pot within our own country. In fact, the whole nineteenth-century notion that urbanization and industrialization create uniformity has to be reexamined in much closer detail, for the Zionist, the Theosophist, and the anthropologist are all members of ethnic, religious, and occupational cultures which are newly differentiated as the result of contemporary movements of peoples. All are city dwellers, whatever ideological distrust of the city they possess. Everett C. Hughes, Oscar Handlin, and Nathan Glazer, leading students of the melting pot, would be inclined to argue that modern life, in America as elsewhere, creates cultural differences as rapidly as it erases them.

But cultural differences, no matter how forcefully they may strike the ear, the eye, or the nose, are not necessarily correlated with character differences of equal significance. The relations between character and culture are so subtle that I couldn't go into them here even if I fully

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understood them, but I think we can all see that the German girl in Southern Illinois may share the general orientations of her neighbors in some respects and not in others, and that the question we ask will determine our emphasis on surface similarities and dynamic differences or vice versa.

The overlapping rôles of men and women, which several recent studies illustrate, can also conveniently exemplify the overlapping that occurs in any selection we make for purposes of study. There are Americans who are more like Frenchmen than most Frenchmen — and they are still Americans. There are Jews who are very "Irish." There are upper-class dead-end kids. And so on. We are dealing here, not with cages in a zoo to which assignment can be made by some Linnaean scheme, but with an incredibly heterogeneous, ever-shifting set of outlooks which flow into one another in space and time. We are dealing here, not with animals instinctively adapted to an environment, but with human beings who contain at any one historical time a much greater repertory of rôles than is ever made manifest. As George Herbert Mead observed, we are each of us an entire stock company, as well as prompter for all the parts. Correspondingly, if we are men we contain the "part" or "rôle" of the women with whom we interact, and vice versa — and not only in those collegiate or army shows in which we put on bras, use pillows for breasts, and wear lipstick in a mock-denial that there is anything womanly about us.

It is this chameleon-like quality of human beings that makes it so immensely difficult for the researcher to select categories which will clearly divide one group from another on any important axis. As Franz Boas discovered, even such seemingly fixed factors as head-form and height alter under environmental influence, so that the children of immigrants to this country take on an "American" shape, just as Guernseys and Jerseys grow coarser and bigger in the next generation after importation from the Channel Islands. And when we deal with national character, we are stressing precisely those aspects of personality which are by definition socially conditioned, and are ignoring somewhat less malleable differences of temperament and physique. Moreover, the researcher himself has a body and is socially conditioned; he is changing, and his subjects are changing during the very progress of his work. The study of national character indeed seems to be an Alice-in-Wonderland croquet game.

In my opinion — and I want to turn now to some of my own studies — we do best if we accept these conditions of the game and frame our questions accordingly. We must invent the categories we use to analyze character, for we cannot take without afterthought the differences that seem to exist in nature. If we assume, for instance, that national character

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is a fairly stable thing, we are in for some surprises. We are apt to think of the Hopi of New Mexico as a very peaceable people, of the "Hopi Way" as being incorrigibly mild, unenergetic, and anti-individualistic. Yet it appears that young men from the Pueblos made excellent GIs in World War II. Whereas they often carried their prayer-sticks with them and remained emotionally in touch with Hopi culture, they became enterprising combat soldiers, good mechanics, and even good bar companions though previously untutored in drinking. It is perhaps still more surprising that many of them were able to come back from ETO to the Pueblos and, though thought a bit wild by the elders, settle back into the rituals and routines almost as if they had never been away. The metamorphosis of individuals which we see here on a small scale strikes us whenever we look at the history of a people who are supposed by the unwary to have a fixed national character. "The" Swedes were "warlike" not so many generations ago; now they produce peace makers. "The" English have gone through fantastic transformations from Elizabethan times to the present. From Merrie England to the Cromwellian sobersides, from eighteenth-century license to mid-Victorian rigidity, and from this to mid-twentieth century "spontaneous collectivism" — these are immense shifts of the emotional center of life for millions of people.

It is, I think, these shifts which especially interest us, as time-bound Westerners. That is, we want to know to what extent our national or group character bears some relation to recent historical changes, as against that part of us which has developed in the slower reaches of Darwinian time. We are interested in a description broader than Freud's concept of genitality and narrower than fate. And in that perspective, character and culture appear to be remarkably fluid.

It would be going, however, much too far to say that there is no such thing as national character, as a moderately tenacious organization of motives in a population at large. Rather, what we have to do is to distinguish clearly between character and behavior, seeing — as Freud gave us techniques for seeing — that the same behavior can spring from very different motives, while of course the same motives can give rise to the most variegated behavior. Restaurants recruit dishwaters from those who don't like dirt and from those who do; some like the slop of dishwashing, and some enjoy gleaming new kitchen equipment — the former, in fact, are often repelled by the latter. (Margaret Mead, who has studied these matters for the advisory council of the National Sanitation foundation, adds that officials of Boards of Health and designers of kitchen equipment are also recruited from dirt-haters — though she suggests that a relaxed sanitarian would never become a happy sloppy dishwater, or a tightened-up dish-

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washer an effective sanitarian.) The management of restaurants requires the establishment of counterpoint among these different character types who supply, inspect, and work in kitchens; stern necessity may impose similar behavior on the different types, but each will pay a different character-conditioned price, or reap a different character-conditioned reward, from the procedures. Poor timing may install sanitary equipment before the "anal" types are available to enjoy it.

Nations are perhaps even more complicated than restaurants, and historically it seems to me that the division of labor and the differentiation of tasks leads to a steady obsolescence of the need to build into men the motives that become institutionalized in the very arrangements of society. Aldous Huxley's acidly brilliant vision in *Brave New World* that advancing mechanization and organization require a graded retrogression in personality development may metaphorically describe what has happened to some people and some cultures, but it is no less true that standardization in machinery (once the earlier, more ferocious stages of industrialization are over) allows us greater rather than less variety in character structure. What does tend to become standardized in such a country as America is not a response to machines but something much more complicated; a response to the demands which people *feel*, correctly or not, the social environment imposes on them.

Let me be quite specific here, and employ as an illustration what Geoffrey Gorer, Reinhard Bendix, and other observers have taken to be peculiarly true of contemporary American society, namely, that Americans are heavily obligated to be friendly, and that in fact we place a much greater premium on friendliness than most peoples of the Western world. This is said to be a somewhat indiscriminate friendliness, as ready to embrace a stranger one has met in a club car as to embrace a brother or schoolfellow one has grown up with. As Gorer puts it, we are not only lonely if we are not with people, but feel guilty also. In *The Lonely Crowd*, my co-workers and I have sought to make these observations more concrete by linking them with institutional developments.

We know, for instance, that, as teachers are becoming more preoccupied with teaching as a human relations art, they increasingly mark children in their school reports on coöperation as well as on their skill in specific subjects. Likewise, we know that in business and industry personnel forms rate people on their friendliness — their "service with a smile" — in a great variety of white-collar jobs. Projective personality tests are sometimes employed in order to make a judgment of such behavior traits and underlying motives. The attitude such testers take could be illustrated by a TAT (Thematic Apperception Test) report I have just

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finished reading on a graduate student in history. The analyst has a great deal to say about his subject's interest in history, i.e., in dead people, as a morbid preoccupation, an overintellectual "defense in depth" against warm, outgoing relations with his fellow human beings. The analyst speaks of the student's rather negative attitude towards social conventions, his preference for TAT stories with an unhappy ending, and his fears for his personal safety, as if a "normal" person must be blithely gregarious, unworried about bombs, and "accepting" of other people in general and their conventions in particular! To be sure, his occupation leads him to look for pathology, not for health. He does observe that the student is highly intelligent, creative in story-telling, and possessed of unusual literary gifts — gifts demonstrated by some quotations from his stories. But the possibility that one can lead a life which is sane but unbalanced, satisfying but one-sided, seems to escape the interpreter, as does the notion that one could be truly and even warmly related to ideas or history rather than to one's contemporaries. When I read his report, I wondered who was being "projective" — that is, whether the write-up didn't tell us at least as much about the character of the analyst as about that of its supposed subject. And the values represented in such an analysis are probably not unrepresentative of certain themes in the American national character at large. Of course, my own reaction is in turn projective!

What I am suggesting here is that American institutions appear to require, or are felt to require, the lubrication of human friendliness from a great many participants, especially in the expanding white-collar and service occupations. Moreover, this demand is one that most Americans seem able to comply with, without feeling that an undue strain is put on them; that is, it is more than surface compliance. Indeed, I think we can see that Americans are friendly not only because we feel we have to be to get along but also because we are brought up to value friendliness for its own sake, to regard it not only as a lubricant of organization but as a consumable in its own right. More than most people, we want to like people and to be liked. Moving as we do against an ever-changing natural and urban landscape, we are very conscious of the people who fill the social space around us. Their response helps locate us in an otherwise bewildering cosmos. We smile, not only to show our Ipana-scrubbed teeth, but to disarm the stranger and to convert him into a friend. Why should he not be a friend, even an intimate, in a society of mobile individuals? Friends, like children, are an indubitable blessing, even if sometimes also a strain, when all other values and goals in life are subject to change and reappraisal. Many novels and plays have been written recently about the "failure of success" — about the career man or career woman

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who makes the grade but loses his friends and/or his soul in the process. Our literature reveals few stories of people who are a success in the sphere of friendship but feel defeated in some other sphere. Indeed, as I have indicated, there seems to be an increasing tendency to assume that unless one can make friends one cannot make the grade at all — an idea which can confirm itself if widely held for long enough.

Of course, I do not mean to say that all white-collar Americans respond to the demand that they be friendly with equal willingness and inner assent. Some may go shopping when they are lonely, or eat a snack, rather than join a club. Many, as Reinhard Bendix suggests, would prefer to live according to the Continental model of a few close friends, held on a lifetime lease, coupled with reserve for people at large. Many, moreover, who wish they didn't have to make friends of people of lower social position or disesteemed ethnic groups, do so out of fear of being thought snobbish or intolerant. In sum, we might say that there are more people who are friendly in America than there are friendly people. Nevertheless, in the complex processes by which the requirements felt by one generation tend to become the motives for which the ensuing generations will seek outlets, it would seem that the emotional vocabulary of friendliness is readily learned by Americans; we want to be friendly and we interpret life and modify our institutions so as to make this want seem sensible.

If we turn now from this single trait of friendliness and its institutional and ideological supports to look in a more general way at American character, I think we can see some of the ways in which my collaborators and I, in *The Lonely Crowd* and other writings, have sought to develop a distinction between a character type we term inner-directed and one we term other-directed. Along with an examination of many other aspects of character and behavior, we have looked at shifts in the evaluation of friendship and its qualities which seem to be occurring in the American middle classes; and we suggest that the attitudes just discussed are more compatible with other-direction as a mode of conformity than with inner-direction. It is hard to sum up briefly the mutations by which these ideal types, as we employ them (in Max Weber's meaning of ideal), differ from each other, but I should point out that the inner-directed type seems to me common to the Western world today, wherever industrialization has made its mark. This type is work-oriented, often driven; it is individualistic, apt to have a stern conscience, or at least to be possessed by clear-cut goals bestowed by parents and other authoritative adults. This type has, so to speak, internalized its ancestors. If contemporaries are obeyed and their expectations satisfied, it is somewhat less because of a need for their love and somewhat more because of their direct instru-

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mental utility. The type is likely to look to pastor or priest for guidance rather than to unburden to peers. Formality of dress and manners is only one sign of the ability and desire to maintain a certain distance from others. In contrast, the other-directed type seems to me to be emerging as an influential minority in the West, and most noticeably in the United States, after the job of industrialization has been done: this is the type more attuned to the voices of contemporaries than to ancestors. Even if this type has a pastor, the latter will have taken courses in pastoral psychology and will prefer the rôle of pal to that of awesome mentor. The other-directed type is consumption-oriented, and friends are among the "goods" of the consumption area; the type looks about horizontally to peers for response and guidance, or to their generalized reflection in the mass media of news and opinion. The type is not so ambitious, not so individualistic, in some ways not so opportunistic, as the inner-directed type.

I think we can see now how the dimension of friendliness may fit into this account. It is very far from being the whole story of other-direction; it is only one facet, and in our interviews we have come across people whom we would term in the main other-directed even though they were not given to friendliness of the sort I have been describing. The converse case is even more clear: America is simply full of men whose friendliness is that of the frontiersman, not of the other-directed urbanite and suburbanite. That is, there is a peppy, luncheon-club or revival-meeting American friendliness that goes back to our small town and rural past — a friendliness quite without the somewhat anxious and dependent and inquiring resonance more typical of other-direction. This illustration will, I hope, make it clear that when we speak of a national or group character, we are talking about a *Gestalt*, a context in which all specific traits have to be interpreted in terms of the whole. We can no more identify other-direction with friendliness than with extraversion or any other simple index by which we sometimes try to distinguish Americans from Europeans. The difficulty of empirical work with these vaguely delineated concepts comes from this very fact, that no single axis suffices to distinguish one character type from another.

Other-direction appears to be compatible with certain requirements — and certain liberations — of an advanced industrial economy and of one with a good deal of abundance. It is a type that fits well enough in a social scene which no longer requires great work-mindedness or great abstinence or great financial honesty of its participants but focusses on the art of spending, including spending time with others on and off the job. It is a type that can flourish when the technological requirements for

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productivity have become routinized in universities and research and development departments and when, correspondingly, the personnel requirements can loom large. And in such an age there tends to be a reduction in the relative number of people engaged in manufacturing and in extractive industries and agriculture, and an enormous growth in the service trades and professions — the areas of the economy classified as "tertiary" by Colin Clark. Among these tertiary industries are those of education and entertainment, which increasingly are called upon to set the tone and fill up the time of the society premised on abundance and widely distributed leisure.

Now I see no inevitability that demands other-direction as the price we must pay to keep our industrial society from going to pieces. Rather, as I have tried to make clear, a society's "needs" — if indeed we can speak at all with such teleology — can be met by a great variety of character types, harnessed to their tasks in a complex social organization by institutional arrangements. Thus, I can conceive of a society with a Leontieff-profile similar to ours — that is, with similar production and distribution accounts — which achieved these ends without calling on the sensitive mechanisms of other-direction, just as the Japanese elite were able to organize industrial production in their country on the foundation of a culture and character quite different from that of their Western models. Industrialism, like other aspects of culture capable of diffusion, can be adopted, once it has been invented, under conditions quite different from those needed for its origination, much as the people who invent stories and the people who retell them need not have the same character. All we can say with a modicum of assurance is that the United States, as it has moved away from nineteenth-century individualism, has undergone profound changes of mood and spirit which the concept of other-direction tries to capture. The correlations I have suggested in *The Lonely Crowd* between these developments and long-term demographic changes in the Western world are at most suggestive — a possible program for research.

In terms of the problem of national character, at least two questions arise. Is other-direction — if we can cope with the phenomenological difficulties of describing it — something which is constant in American history, and only more noticeable at the present time than heretofore? Or is it a character type we may expect to emerge, other things being equal, in cultures which reach a similar demographic, industrial, and organizational plateau? Or, indeed, as Europeans for several centuries have hoped and feared, does America represent the shape of European or even global things to come? As for the first question, when one reads Tocqueville, one gets an impression of America in the 1830's startlingly like the

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America of today, and in many ways unlike the America of the post-Civil War period. The Americans of Tocqueville's scrutiny are friendly; they regard all comers as peers; they tend to live in the present; they are joiners; they are more impressed by personal qualities than by craftsman-like skills; and so on. If we are still, or have again become, such a type, we can at least suggest that certain conditions true in Tocqueville's time are still true, or have been recreated, despite the enormous changes on many fronts — and I am thinking particularly of social equality and mobility, of the lack of firm class barriers.

I say this knowing that many students of American society have insisted for years that, with the closing down of frontiers, there is less mobility, less opportunity to rise from the bottom. But I have read their evidence and am unconvinced. Undoubtedly, we have a class system, with some relatively fixed prestige positions — although I don't think more fixed than in the past. But we have enlarged the educational ladders by which people can climb from one position to another, and in small business we have a large place for working-class entrepreneurship to demonstrate its energies and talents. Thus, the social scene does not present individuals with clear pyramids of class authority, as, despite more explicit socialist influence, Europe still does. A Swiss businessman recently said to me, "It takes a long time for us Swiss to get used to the fact that when we go into a store we have to be polite to get waited on, rather than as at home having everybody running because we are the son of some big-shot." It is interesting that this remark was made by a man the political institutions of whose country are probably more democratic than ours.

Hence I would suggest that other-direction is, in some of its aspects, related to social equality (it develops within the American middle class — not in the upper or lower classes) and to its emancipating as well as its constricting features. I don't think equality has been constant in America, but rather that we are seeing now, with the cutting off of greenhorns from Europe, with the rapid urbanization of our green grass growers, with the cutting down of the pelf, power, and prestige of the business tycoon, and with the vastly greater public school education — we are seeing a kind of return of the repressed, a restoration under new circumstances of an earlier perhaps more intransigent and less subtle equalitarianism. I am anything but an historicist, and I don't think this had to happen, or that anything in the American setting, genes, plains, or processes of socialization per se demanded it. (However, I am inclined to think that Western Europe, which has long been able to export its masses to America and there forget about them, is now in the throes of a devel-

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opment which is similar in some respects. Feudalism crumbles in Europe under the aegis of Coca-Cola and the comics — a development which forces the intellectual leaders of European society to take a closer look at the popular culture of their own lower strata which they had previously been able to be romantic about. The spread of "American" styles in popular consumption and even of a certain feeling of equality does not alone allow us to predict that Europe, too, will see a movement towards other-direction. Where equality and abundance have gone hand in hand, there are some signs of it, but we lack the comparative studies which would carry us beyond surface impressions. All these transatlantic questions, complicated as they are by polemics and inferiority feelings on both sides, must remain open for the time being.)

When, however, we start talking about the character types I have labelled inner-directed and other-directed (there is no space here to sketch in other complicating aspects of the typology), we are not talking about national character in the strict sense, even though the boundaries of one or another type turn out to lie more within than without the confines of a given nation. Moreover, it is arguable that we are talking somewhat less about character than about culture — that is, about two somewhat contrasting, somewhat overlapping patterns of value, possession, belief, and so on, which can be differentiated in America — patterns of culture which, as I have earlier implied, are not necessarily "carried" by equally differentiated character types. This, to repeat, means that Americans may *be* one way, and *behave* in another way, within wide limits. I shall return to this problem in a moment, but here I want to make clear that the very amorphous boundaries of this typology, both nationally and psychologically, result from an effort to set forth an hypothesis as to historical development in the Western world as a whole. In fact, I have been very explicitly making a selection of themes, creating abstract or constructed character types: I start with an idea, not with Rand McNally. And this is because I am curious, less about the differences between Frenchmen or Germans, or Norwegians and Danes, and more about the possible consequences for Western man of long-continued industrial advance under conditions of social equality and quick and ready communications.

In this connection, recently reported work by Professor Daniel Lerner on the impact of mass media of communication on the Turkish hinterland is most suggestive. In his research, the standard socio-economic categories served less well to divide the modern-minded from the traditional peasant than aspiration did — tested by such questions as what the respondent would do if he were premier (the traditionalist found the question shock-

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ing or pointless) or where he would like to live if he couldn't live in his own village. The peasant in transition already has opinions on such matters and can imaginatively project himself into new situations — but this immensely significant process will not be captured by use simply of categories based on region, occupation, or income. Yet it is these that we are tempted to fall back upon in order to avoid commitment to any necessarily tentative theory of social and psychological change. Development of such a theory requires us sharply to limit the number of variables the researcher works with — to fight down the temptation to multiply the number of our character types in the hope of a closer "fit" with our data. Since our consciences and our critics daily remind us of the interconnectedness of things, of the complexity of factors to be taken into account, we look longingly to the safety of including "everything" — sex and class, occupation and region, age-grade and religion, until every conceivable sub-culture counts as a single type. Yet in the present state of research on national character, when our ambitions have outrun our abilities, we can hardly do without an uncomfortable messiness of approach.

It follows that, in trying to capture with such terms as "inner-direction" and "other-direction" both great historical movements and minute character changes, I knew that I could not be "operational" in any strict sense. For I was dealing with something lying between psychoanalytic characterologies which are based on sexual orientation — Freud's oral, anal and genital types, attitudes presumably found among all groups — on the one hand, and Max Weber's kind of ideological construction on the other. Though interview material hèlped to stimulate my concepts, along with other similarly unprocessed data, I did not come across — or expect to come across — individuals who would unequivocally be seen as representative of one type rather than another. Particularly was this true with other-direction which, as an emerging tendency, would, except in pathological instances, always be found in combination with inner-direction.. Sharpening the definitions to make it less difficult to deal with individuals would have made it, perhaps, more difficult to deal with history. The individuals who come to life in the pages of the best ethnographic accounts of preliterate peoples seem to represent for us "the" Hopi Way, or "the" Salteaux Way, or "the" Trobriand Way, with somewhat less confusion; their range of idiosyncrasy appears less bewildering. In contrast to this, a modern stratified industrial society, as I have pointed out earlier, is constantly throwing up new types of people, which means that older types are, because faced with the newer ones, also changing.

Moreover, the gap between ideology and behavior, always present in a society, tends to widen, especially as the rôles people are capable of play-

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ing grow in number. Recently, a psychologist, Elaine Bell, began developing a questionnaire which might distinguish between inner-direction and other-direction among teen-agers. She presented them with a number of hypothetical situations, such as the following: John is an 8-year-old boy who is expecting his ninth birthday. His parents have given him a choice between two expensive presents. He may either have his first two-wheeler bike, like those which most of his friends have. Or — since his hobby is building things out of wood — he may chose his own workbench, complete with tools.

a) Which gift do you think John would be most likely to choose? (check one)
— the bike
— the workbench

b) If you were John, which would you choose?
— the bike
— the workbench

The high-school and college groups to whom the test has so far been given tended to chose the bike, not only for John but for themselves, despite their awareness that a workbench is far more expensive. Other questions — dealing for instance with ambition for fame as against desire for popularity; with honesty versus group morale; with attitudes towards the problem of *The Caine Mutiny;* well over 100 questions in all — seemed to reveal among the high schoolers a fairly consistent tendency to choose the "groupy" as against the "individualist" response.

This work is in its exploratory stages, and what these answers mean is by no means clear. Many of the questionnaire situations posed a dilemma between conformity to peer-group values and conformity to adult standards or internalized principles. Some young people consistently chose to conform to the wishes and standards of their friends even when there might seem to be compelling moral and personal reasons for opposing them. As one student of mine put it, in trying to explain why he and his fellows could so easily move into the Army and radically change their mode of behavior, and then, with surprisingly few strains, move back into civilian life: "We have been trained for only one thing all our lives: to do what our age-mates do, irrespective of content; this formal principle is, in effect, our character." Yet with such a student one could not necessarily conclude that he is actually other-directed. He may believe in conformity as a virtue; he may have adopted as the content of his ethics an attitude compatible with other-direction as an ideology. And for many others equalitarianism — even leveling of self to the perceived level of others —

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becomes a matter of principle, not of opportunism — though indeed one would be mistaken not to recognize that opportunism can itself become a matter of principle, as it did for some of Balzac's heroes.

Though the relations between ideology and character remain obscure, it is revealing to know what the ideology of these young people is, and to surmise the extent to which it may have changed in recent decades, although even there one cannot be sure one is not dealing with an adolescent syndrome — a stage on life's way rather than a total life pattern. In fact, Erik Erikson has emphasized the "rôle diffusion" of the American adolescent as a problem of his search for identity in an ever-changing culture. Taking his comments together with Margaret Mead's observation that what appears as other-direction may sometimes spring from a highly moralistic desire never to let others down, we are presented with a whole set of problems that may not be answerable until we have followed these adolescents into their jobs, their marriages, their middle age.

If we want to probe "beneath" ideology, we may resort to tests such as the Rorschach, which are more "projective," that is, they probe more deeply into underlying motivations. But anyone who is familiar with Rorschach reports knows that they ordinarily focus on dimensions of character of a different order — such traits as suspiciousness, masculinity, compulsiveness, sexual adequacy, imagination, and so on. For many purposes of cultural analysis and comparison, these dimensions are highly relevant ones; they inform the work of A. Irving Hallowell on the Salteaux, of Cora Dubois on the Alorese, of the Jules Henrys on the Pilaga Indians, of Anthony F. C. Wallace on the Tuscarora Indians, etc. The Rorschach will perhaps allow us to distinguish between the character structure of a tribe like the Ifaluk that trusts people and fears only ghosts and one like the Alorese that suspects people and puts no trust in ghosts either. In the skilled hands of such an analyst as Ernest Schachtel, the test may even show whether a boy will be delinquent or not. But the concepts of inner-direction and other-direction are intended to capture not such specific facts, and even generalized orientation to space and to people, but rather something still more underlying and general, namely, the attitude people take toward their society, their unconscious way of relating themselves to their place in the society and to the others in it.

Yet what is "place" in society and who are the "others"? A person who may be considered clearly other-directed will differ very much from others of his general "type" depending on the perceptions he has of the rôle-behavior expected of him, and of the others who form his audiences. In his very effort to conform he may reject certain values which are more compatible with other-direction than with inner-direction; he may obey

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what he senses of the mood of others rather than the imperatives *they* actually obey. Events may deprive one either of the assured values or of the personnel towards which one has been compliant; one may be plunged into new situations where the salient others contradict each other; or one may interpret a new situation as an old one and thus miss others' cues. Rorschach testers, steeped in Freudian dynamics, have not been particularly concerned about these levels which both link and separate character and behavior — though again, the imaginative projective tester can say an astonishing amount about these levels if encouraged to do so. Nevertheless, it is plain that an enormous amount of work must be done before an empirical method for testing character in our sense can be worked out. In the process our terms must be refined or discarded for better ones. But in any case I am inclined to think that the testing of individuals and the description of historically-conditioned character types cannot be easily reconciled; aim, method, and focus are different — as my book *Faces in the Crowd* indicates.

In what I have said so far, it may sound almost as if I were impatient with the tumultuous variety of Western men and women, who make the task of the investigator so baffling and complex; I can't recall giving a lecture where I have felt so troubled by the difficulties I was too rapidly passing in review or by-passing. Actually, I find a kind of pleasure in the refractoriness of human beings to all analytic systems, including my own. As Freud found in the "resistance" of his patients the actual dynamics of cure, so I find in the "resistance" of individuals to the solution of historical questions a challenge also. Since, as I said at the outset, I believe in the social sciences for their own sake, for what they can contribute to our understanding for the sheer pleasure of understanding, the fact that the tasks are endless and insuperable is not a source for regret. Sisyphus suffered from having to push a stone uphill, but if it had been a tennis ball batted around, he would have enjoyed it. Life is partly a stone to be pushed uphill and partly a tennis ball to be played with, and research, if it is to understand and cope with life, will do well to nourish itself on a similar dialectic.

Afternote

The article reprinted above is subtitled "An Informal Commentary" and that does not understate the case. It is based on the transcription of a lecture given at the University of Pennsylvania in the spring of 1953 in a series entitled "A Portrait of Western Man." As can be seen, it is rambling and ruminative rather than scholarly; it is reprinted here virtually without change. An overlapping discussion, more psychologically oriented, appears in "Some

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Observations on the Study of American Character," *Psychiatry*, XV (August 1952), 333–338. Both articles make clear my view about the limitations of the concept of national character and suggest some of the perplexities in linking individual, more or less psychoanalytic, explanations to larger anthropological and historical ones. I return to this topic in "The Study of National Character: Some Observations on the American Case," *Harvard Library Bulletin*, Vol. XIII (Winter 1959), 5–24; reprinted in *Abundance for What? and Other Essays* (New York, Doubleday, 1964), 584–603.

The reader who wants an overview of discussions of American national character can find these readily accessible in Michael McGiffert, ed., *The Character of Americans: A Book of Readings* (Homestead, Ill., The Dorsey Press, 1964), which contains a selective annotated bibliography. Cogent discussion as to whether American character has changed or not, along with methodological and substantive criticisms of *The Lonely Crowd*, are gathered in Seymour Martin Lipset and Leo Lowenthal, eds., *Culture and Social Character: The Work of David Riesman Reviewed* (Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1961); this volume also contains my own discussion (in collaboration with Nathan Glazer) of what seemed in retrospect to be some of the errors of judgment and conception in *The Lonely Crowd*. (This latter chapter with some modifications appears as a preface to the paperback Yale edition of the book.) The Lipset-Lowenthal collection includes the full report of the research by Elaine Bell (Elaine Bell Sofer) and readers are referred to her excellent account.

The issues touched upon in the essay here reprinted have of course continued to be a staple of popular and highbrow discussion in the last decade and a half. Among sophisticated and college educated young people, "groupiness" and conformity would seem to be much more strongly resisted, at least on the verbal level. Students in the better colleges, for instance, would be almost ashamed to have "too many" friends today and would set a much higher threshold on the definition of friendship. Furthermore, research in the relevant social sciences has become much more intense, so that work in the area of national character would seem to languish because of its imprecision and unsuitability for the methodological finesse which is now much more available.

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Carl N. Degler

The Sociologist as Historian: Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*

IT SEEMS TO BE EITHER THE FATE OR THE OPPORTUNITY OF HISTORIANS TO be checking on how others use history. For it is the non-historians who write the broad interpretations of the American past. In the 1940s it was philosophers like Herbert Schneider and Ralph Barton Perry who ranged over the whole of American history and told us what it meant. More recently, in the 1950s, the sociologists have taken their turn. The most notable of several works by sociologists[1] is *The Lonely Crowd,* by David Riesman and others.[2] It is true, of course, that the primary object of that book is to analyze the nature of modern American society, not to reconstruct our past. Yet in the course of the work, if only as a bench

1 At one time in working on this paper I included a study of two other sociological works that have helped to delineate modern conceptions of the American past, namely, W. H. Whyte Jr., *The Organization Man* (Garden City, N. Y., 1956) and C. Wright Mills, *White Collar, The American Middle Classes* (New York, 1956). But a close examination of these two works revealed that though they assumed a view of the nineteenth-century American past that was similar in many respects to that of Riesman, their explicit description was small and therefore not really worth inclusion on a level with the very full and explicit discussion to be found in *The Lonely Crowd.* Hence I have concentrated here only upon that book. Furthermore, *The Lonely Crowd* is so much more subtle and sensitive in its depiction of the nineteenth century that any critique of that superior work can also serve as a criticism of the less complete view of the nineteenth century to be found in the works of Whyte and Mills.

2 David Riesman, Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denney, *The Lonely Crowd* (New York, 1953). Riesman is the principal author and I have attributed to him alone, for the sake of simplicity, any ideas I have cited from the book. Hereafter cited as *LC.*

Throughout this paper I have used the paperback edition, even though it is abridged, simply because it was the form in which most readers would see the book. Inasmuch as the abridgment was done by the authors and the amount cut out is less than 70 pages and those largely concerned with methodological matters, there is not much difference between the popular and the scholarly versions. I have collated the two and only once did I find anything in the original edition which caused me to qualify, and then only slightly, a conclusion I had drawn from the paperback edition. The paperback edition, in reality, is a second edition rather than a simple abridgment since it contains some restatements of ideas, rearrangements of materials and, occasionally, new material.

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mark from which to triangulate, as it were, the social dimensions of our own time, Riesman has set forth, or assumed, a rather definite picture of the society of the nineteenth century.

Because the book has become widely known—it is now available in at least two paperback editions—its presentation of the American past invites examination. After all, for the many Americans who have read it, Riesman's conception *is* the past. For that reason alone it is worth asking whether his conception has historical validity. Furthermore, since one of Riesman's conclusions is that the American character has changed between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an examination of the validity of his view of the nineteenth century has an important bearing upon the nature of the national character. At the outset, though, it should be understood that this examination is not concerned with the book's primary interest in the nature of twentieth-century Americans; it deals only with the society of the nineteenth century as depicted in *The Lonely Crowd.*

As is well known, *The Lonely Crowd* describes a new type of social personality emerging in America and in the rest of the modern industrialized world. This is the other-directed man. In the nineteenth century, the argument goes, the ruling social character of people was inner-direction. The book deals with "the way in which one kind of social character, which dominated America in the nineteenth century is gradually replaced by a social character of quite a different sort."[3] To be perfectly accurate, and despite this quotation, it should be said that the inner-directed person, as Riesman conceives of him, is not strictly a historically rooted figure, limited to the nineteenth century. Inner-directed people exist today and there were other-directed personalities in the nineteenth century. But as the foregoing quotation and other material in the early pages of the book make clear, Riesman sees Americans of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries differing to the degree they are dominated by inner- or other-direction. Hence, for all intents and purposes, and despite the admitted and deliberate looseness with which Riesman applies his categories, he sees a change through time in the American character. The inner-directed personality dominated the nineteenth century and the other-directed has increasingly dominated the twentieth.

One other general statement needs to be made before we turn to an examination of Riesman's conception of nineteenth-century American society. Despite the breadth of Riesman's canvas, he writes about and confines his assertions to the American middle class. The culture of the working class is ignored and, even though he is dealing with a nineteenth-

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 17

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century society that was largely agricultural, he limits his attention almost entirely to urban life. Such a restriction raises the question of whether his description of nineteenth-century life is representative. But that is another question; the analysis here is addressed to those aspects of the nineteenth century he has elected to deal with.

Since Riesman at no one place in his book sets forth his conception of the society of the nineteenth century, his view has to be pieced together from scattered references throughout the book. At times, especially in discussing Riesman's conception of nineteenth-century politics, it will be possible to offer, concomitantly, some criticisms of his interpretation. In any case, once his image of the nineteenth century has been delineated, then it will be examined for its congruency with the historian's conception of that period.

Riesman's view of the past is on a grand scale. During the era of the Renaissance and Reformation, he writes, there was a transition from the tradition-directed man to the inner-directed. The former is a person guided and channeled in his activities and thought by his society; simply because things have always been done in a given way they should still be performed that way. Tradition-directed man has played little part in America because the colonies were settled only after the emergence of the inner-directed man. This second type of social personality is typically self-reliant, self-confident, clear about his goals and objects in life. Seventeenth-century Puritans are the classic examples of inner-directed persons: outwardly energetic, tough-minded, self-determined, yet inwardly concerned with moral renovation. "They tend to feel, throughout life that their characters are something to be worked on."[4] Because they derive the justification for their actions from within themselves (hence the term inner-directed), "loneliness and even persecution are not thought of as the worst of fates. Parents, sometimes even teachers may have crushing moral authority, but the peer-group has less moral weight, glamorous or menacing though it may be."[5] Translated into more familiar words, the inner-directed personality is individualistic and self-reliant.

In *The Lonely Crowd* the decisive, ruthless, brusque, self-confident robber baron is taken as typical of the nineteenth century. If an inner-directed person "founded a firm, this was his lengthened shadow."[6] In those days, Riesman writes, "it is fair to say that the human mood of the work force was not yet felt to be a major problem." Instead employers concerned themselves with getting out the goods and not with the people who worked or consumed the goods. In short, as a society, the inner-directed were more concerned with production than consumption, more

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 62. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 90. [6] *LC*, p. 165.

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with things than with people. "It was the product itself, . . . not the use made of it by the consumer that commanded attention. Despite what Marx called 'the fetishism of commodities,' the inner-directed man could concern himself with the product without himself being a good consumer; he did not need to look at himself through the customer's eyes." [7] In substance, the economy of the nineteenth century was "quite loose-jointed and impersonal and perhaps seemed even more impersonal than it actually was." [8]

It was the involvement with things, instead of people, which underlay the pervasive impersonality of the nineteenth century. That century was symbolized, Riesman contends, by the bank account, while the modern business world is summed up in the expense account.[9] The glad hand has taken the place of the old devotion to craftsmanship and the product. Instead of the corps of public relations advisors, labor counselors and advertising men that modern business requires in dealing with people, "business firms until World War I," Riesman explains, "needed only three kinds of professional advice: legal, auditing, and engineering." And significantly, all three, he adds, were impersonal services.[10]

The inner-directed person of the nineteenth century was "job-minded" and clear about his goals.[11] The old Latin motto of the nineteenth century: *"Ad Astra Per Aspera"* has become, in our day, a "Milky Way" of multiple and changing goals.[12] Simply because his standards were internal, failure for the inner-directed man was possible without feelings of total inadequacy. Edison's example of trying again and again (presumably for the best substance for a light bulb filament) is the archetype of the inner-directed man.[13]

Work was hard, important and different from play. As Riesman puts it: "The inner-directed businessman was not expected to have fun; indeed, it was proper for him to be gloomy and even grim." [14] Thus literature and other forms of entertainment were escape from work and problems; the other-directed man, however, cannot escape and so he uses popular culture for group adjustment.[15]

Since Riesman attaches great importance to upbringing in fixing social character, the life of the child in the age of inner-direction is discussed at some length. He sums up the differences in child-rearing practices in the three types of society by saying that in the tradition-directed home the child "propitiates" its parents; in the inner-directed age, he "fights or succumbs to them," and in the other-directed era, he "manipulates

7 *LC*, p. 136.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 138.
9 *Ibid.*, p. 161.
10 *Ibid.*, p. 159.
11 *Ibid.*, p. 151.
12 *Ibid.*, p. 165.
13 *Ibid.*, p. 150.
14 *Ibid.*, p. 161.
15 *Ibid.*, p. 184.

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them and is in turn manipulated."[16] Like the man, the inner-directed child is "job-minded, even if the job itself is not clear in his mind." Today, "the future occupation of all moppets is to be skilled consumers."[17] The demand made of inner-directed children was that they work, study, pray and save.[18] "Even boys from comfortable homes were expected until recently to hit the sunrise trail with paper routes or other economically profitable and 'character-building' chores."[19] The large size of the family in the era of inner-direction resulted in the older children harmlessly hazing the young ones and thus psychically toughening them.[20] But a large family did not mean that group activity was paramount in the life of the child. Instead, the inner-directed child was more likely to go off and read a book, for, as Riesman says, "in contrast with the lone reader of the era of inner-direction, we have the group of kids today, lying on the floor reading and trading comics and preferences among comics, or listening to 'The Lone Ranger.'"[21]

The school of the nineteenth century reflected the stern character of the home environment. The instructional emphasis was on intellectual activities and there was little emotional involvement for teacher or pupil. "The teacher is supposed to see that the children learn a curriculum, not that they enjoy it or learn group cooperation."[22] As befits a society bent upon production, the whole emphasis is on accomplishment and not on "internal group relations," or morale.[23]

Undoubtedly to anyone with a spark of inner-direction in his personality the nineteenth century as depicted in *The Lonely Crowd* is almost too good to be true. Riesman, to be sure, explicitly denies that he is making comparisons between paradise and paradise lost.[24] Nevertheless there is a golden glow suffusing the past, which is absent when the present is discussed; the trenchant realism with which the present is limned rarely penetrates the portrait of the past. Sometimes the past is almost shamelessly romanticized as in this passage: "As recently as 1920 an American boy of the middle class was not too worried about the problem of committing himself to a career. . . . He could dream of long-term goals because the mere problem of career entry and survival was not

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 72-73.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 67.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 76.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 122.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 78.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

[24] Riesman is careful to point out that one must not unthinkingly value the inner-directed man over the other-directed simply on the grounds of his seeming independence. For, as he points out, the inner-directed man is "no less a conformist to others than the other-directed person, but the voices to which he listens are more distant, of an older generation, their cues internalized in his childhood." *LC*, p. 48. In any case, it is clear that a fourth type, the autonomous person, is the ideal toward which Riesman looks.

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acute; that he might for long be out of a job did not occur to him." [25]

There was an integration and a meaning to life in those days absent in our own. Men were not under constant public scrutiny then as they are today and consequently they could be more themselves. "The inner-directed person reading a book alone, is less aware of the others looking on; moreover he has time to return at his own pace from being transported by his reading—to return and put on whatever mask he cares to." [26] Even sexual experience was more soundly grounded in the nineteenth century. Today, comments Riesman, sex is of engrossing interest to an other-directed person largely in order to afford him "reassurance that he is alive. The inner-directed person driven by his internal gyroscope and oriented toward the production problems of his outer world, did not need this evidence." [27]

It is in fitting the politics of the nineteenth century into his scheme that Riesman most romanticizes the past and in the process exaggerates its difference from the present.[28] In delineating the political outlook of the inner-directed, Riesman draws a picture of the nineteenth century that is at best misleading and, at worst, inaccurate. According to him the political apathy so characteristic of our day was wholly absent in the nineteenth century. "Cynicism toward politics as a whole (as against cynicism about democracy or bossism or other specific political form or usage) was virtually unknown. Indeed, a feeling prevailed in many circles that the millenium was near." [29] This picture, which has certain relevance for the age of Jackson, is hard to reconcile with the description of political life between the years 1865 and 1896 that emerged from the autobiography of Henry Adams, Ostrogorski's *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties* and Woodrow Wilson's *Congressional Government.*

Almost by definition in Riesman's analysis, William McKinley, because he was in office at the end of the nineteenth century, must be made out to be among the last of the inner-directed political leaders. As a consequence, in making the decision to take the nation into war in 1898, McKinley is contrasted with Franklin Roosevelt, who, in the age of other-

[25] *LC*, p. 140. [26] *Ibid.*, p. 186. [27] *Ibid.*, p. 173.

[28] This is not to say that he has nothing important to contribute, for he has. His observation, for example, that the other-directed man is typically an "inside-dopester" in political behavior is an apt and accurate characterization of the contemporary pseudo-realist who, in political discussions knows all the angles and is ever ready to divulge some story of hidden motives behind political behavior or to attribute Machiavellian slyness to straightforward acts of human sympathy. Similarly, Riesman's attribution of the name "moralizer" to the inner-directed strikes a note of rightness in the mind of anyone who has read the speeches of someone like William Jennings Bryan. See *LC*, pp. 200-17. But there is a vast difference between having insight into political types and characterizing an age as being dominated by one of them.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 203.

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direction, was in no position to make the decision himself, as McKinley had been, but was forced to wait upon the action of the enemy.[30] That McKinley's decision for war should be considered an example of inner-direction strikes the historian as strange. After all, wasn't it Theodore Roosevelt who said McKinley possessed no more backbone than a chocolate eclair? That description hardly comports with our image of the inner-directed man. And even in the particular instance of the decision to declare war McKinley does not emerge as a man of self-confidence and will. It is true that McKinley was in a position to make a decision between peace and war in a way that Franklin Roosevelt was not, but that was simply the result of different historical circumstances in the two instances. The manner of the decision had nothing to do with the approach to politics of two different character structures, as Riesman contends. It would seem more to the point that McKinley, for all his alleged inner-direction, acceded to the demands for war from his party and the public, despite his own wishes to preserve peace.[31] In short, in this instance McKinley acted like a man with an other-directed personality.

The style of Franklin Roosevelt's domestic leadership is also said to conform to that of the other-directed character structure. Today, Riesman argues, "what is called political leadership consists, as we could see in Roosevelt's case, in the tolerant ability to manipulate coalitions."[32] That may be true, but the implication that such manipulation is a twentieth-century phenomenon is certainly false. American politics has always involved the creation and manipulation of coalitions, from Jefferson's with Aaron Burr, through Jackson's and Lincoln's down to John Kennedy's. Coalitions and their manipulation have been a function of our geographical extent and of the local character of our party structure rather than an innovation introduced by a change in the character structure of Americans.

One more observation on Riesman's analysis of nineteenth-century politics. "The bullet that killed McKinley," he writes, "marked the end of the days of explicit class leadership."[33] Presumably he means that business interests dominated politics in the forty years prior to McKinley's death, which may well be true, but the implication that leadership was carried on in the name of class is certainly not true. One has only to recall the changes which were rung upon James G. Blaine's presence at the millionaire's dinner at Delmonico's in 1884 to see how dangerous it was for a politician to seem to ally himself openly with the wealthy classes.

[30] *Ibid.*, p. 244.
[31] Margaret Leech, *In the Days of McKinley* (New York, 1959), pp. 184-85.
[32] *LC*, p. 244.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 241.

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The ordinary citizen during these years, Riesman goes on, grounded his politics in self-interest and did not, as the other-directed man would, consult his "preferences and likings" in the voting booth.[34] Here, too, he seems to be wandering from the historical facts. If there is one thing we have learned about the Jacksonian period, for example, it is that the enthusiastic popular support of Jackson is largely inexplicable except in the language of charisma and mystique.[35] Moreover, as Richard Hofstadter has pointed out,[36] it was not until the utopian nostrums of Populism were defeated in 1896 that the farmer turned to a realistic appraisal of his own needs and came out for frankly self-interested devices like price supports and parity. And while we are on the subject of self-interest in politics, it is worth observing that probably no era has been more notable in this regard than the years since 1932, with appeals to labor, farmers, Negroes, senior citizens. And the reason is that our political parties, after all, for most of our history, not just in the nineteenth century, rather than being based on a few grand, differentiating principles, have been composed of diverse interest groups, frankly held in common allegiance by concrete appeals to self-interest. Was there really any more self-interest in the waving of the bloody shirt by the Republicans during the two decades after the Civil War than in the waving of the tattered shirt by the Democrats in the twenty years since the Great Depression? In substance, then, in attempting to highlight the other-directedness of our modern political practice, Riesman has felt compelled to see the practices of the nineteenth century in a relatively dimmer light. To the historian, though, the broad features of our political practice seem, at least since the days of the democratic upheaval associated with the name of Andrew Jackson, remarkably similar and persistent.

As the foregoing remarks imply, my dissatisfaction with the image of the nineteenth century portrayed in the pages of *The Lonely Crowd* is not simply its lack of realism. It extends to Riesman's assertion that there is a clear difference in social characteristics between the nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries. The two periods simply are not that sharply differentiated. As is evident from the discussion on politics, the social characteristics of our time are often found to be present in the nineteenth century. The question therefore arises whether the origins of other-direction do not really go back much farther in our history than Riesman has been willing to recognize. I hesitate to put myself in the position of

[34] *Loc. cit.*

[35] John William Ward, *Andrew Jackson, Symbol For an Age* (New York, 1955) is largely devoted to showing this aspect of Jackson; see also, Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion* (Stanford, 1957), chap. 1.

[36] Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York, 1955), chap. 3.

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emulating those medievalists who have been pulling the Renaissance back into the Dark Ages, century by century, but, in effect, that is what I am suggesting. Let us look into other areas of nineteenth-century life for further evidence that other-direction began before the twentieth century.

Anyone who is familiar with Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* must, when he first examines Riesman's book, ask himself, "What is the difference between the other-directed man of the twentieth century and the majority-dominated man of the nineteenth of whom Tocqueville was so fearful?" As we read in Riesman's pages the persuasive descriptions of our own other-directed world, the observations of Tocqueville keep nagging at the periphery of our minds. We are tempted to ask, "Is not this other-directed man an old story in America?"

Riesman, to be sure, recognizes that Tocqueville may have seen the type first. He believes, however, that Tocqueville was describing not an other-directed man, but an inner-directed one who was being controlled by outside forces. In Jackson's time, he writes, the need for seeking the opinions of one's peers had not yet been internalized by society and parents.[37] Indeed, in two different places Riesman takes the evidence of Tocqueville and turns it to the support of his own thesis, observing that Jacksonian America was a kind of training ground, a beginning, as it were, for the later development of other-directed man.[38] The question immediately arises, how does Riesman know? From the printed word it is hard to tell whether these people of Tocqueville's time were "merely practising" or whether their attitudes were "embedded in their character."[39] Furthermore, the type was so common that Tocqueville was only the most perceptive of the travelers who reported it. But even if we

[37] *LC*, pp. 35, 40.

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 254, 293. After referring to Tocqueville's comments, Riesman writes on p. 254: "very likely what was mere practice in his day has become embedded in character in ours."

[39] In the original edition, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven, 1950), p. 20, in a footnote which does not appear in the abridged edition, Riesman seems to discount the testimony of Tocqueville. He writes: "I have tried to discover, by reading the eyewitness social observers of the early nineteenth century in America, whether Tocqueville 'saw' or 'foresaw' it, to what extent he was influenced—as visiting firemen of today also are—by American snobs who take their image of Europe as the norm in describing their own countrymen. And to what extent, in establishing America's polarity with Europe, he tendentiously noticed those things that were different rather than those that were the same. From conversation with Phillips Bradley and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and from G. W. Pierson, *Tocqueville and Beaumont in America* . . . I got the impression that all these qualifications must be put on Tocqueville's picture of America in the 1830's." It is not clear whether the deletion of this footnote, when others were retained, results from an alteration in his thought or from a simple desire to save space. In any event, this passage suggests that Riesman recognized the problem which Tocqueville's report presented.

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leave this question aside, Riesman's casual disposal of Tocqueville's majority-dominated man is not quite convincing. If the men of Jacksonian America were in training for other-direction, as he suggests, what happened to them in the subsequent age of the robber barons, which, we have been assured, was the heyday of the inner-directed man?

One possible answer, as has been suggested, is that in describing other-direction, Riesman is actually picturing the American character for most of its history; that the other-directed personality has dominated since at least Tocqueville's day and that it continued to do so even in that age of so-called rugged individualism—the second half of the nineteenth century. Lord Bryce, it is true, in his *American Commonwealth* denies that the fears of Tocqueville had been realized in the 1880s,[40] but elsewhere in his book he describes the American in a manner that gets very close to Riesman's conception of other-direction.[41] Furthermore, if we look at the number of traits that Riesman picks out as peculiar to the nineteenth century, inner-directed society, we see that, for almost all of them, large qualifications from the historical evidence have to be made.

Solidity of work and attention to production were certainly elements of the Old America, but the land speculator, the wildcat banker, the projector in general were as much a part of the American business scene as the better-remembered stodgy banker and the tight-fisted entrepreneur who sweated his laborers because he cared mainly for production. Was the primary form of entertainment in the nineteenth century really solitary reading? Were not the tears that flowed so profusely when Little Eva was lifted to heaven in performances of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" as much the result of a sentimental peer culture as are analogous reactions in our own time? Nor is the manipulation of children by parents and of husbands by wives novel or more acceptable today than it was in the nineteenth century. Tom Sawyer was beloved for his skill at getting a fence painted by manipulation and the point of James M. Barrie's play

[40] James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (London, 1888), II, 312-13.

[41] Majority rule, Bryce pointed out, weakens the sense of individualism. A man "cannot long hold that he is right and the multitude wrong. An American submits more readily than an Englishman would do, ay, even to what an Englishman would think an injury to his private rights. . . . It may seem a trivial illustration to observe that when a railway train is late, or a waggon drawn up opposite a warehouse door stops the horse-car for five minutes, the passengers take the delay far more cooly and uncomplainingly than Englishmen would do. . . . It is all in the course of nature. What is an individual that he should make a fuss because he loses a few minutes, or is taxed too highly." *Ibid.*, II, 304. When he asked a conductor on an elevated railroad how he was able to enforce the rule against smoking when all other trains permitted smoking, the conductor replied: "I always say when anyone seems disposed to insist, 'Sir, I am sure that if you are a gentleman you will not wish to bring me into difficulty' and then they always leave off." *Ibid.*, II, 607n. See also his conclusions on the lack of individualism in the "inner life of men" in America, *Ibid.*, II, 678-79.

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"What Every Woman Knows" was clearly that men are generally manipulated by their women. To say, as Riesman does,[42] that the inner-directed person of the nineteenth century "pursued clear acquisition and consumption goals with a fierce individualism," is to ignore the suffocating popularity of Currier and Ives prints and Rogers statuary groups of that day. Furthermore, as Russell Lynes has shown, the mediocrity of taste so common in the nineteenth century was often deliberately cultivated as well as pervasive.[43] And what, one must ask, was the mission of the celebrated Sir Joseph Duveen but the education of "individualistic" robber barons to appreciate the "right" things in art?

Although Riesman's description of the child in the age of inner-direction, aside from its somewhat unrealistic tone, comports with that generally held by many today, it squares not at all with the picture drawn by historians of the American family. The research which has been done in this field, it is true, is slight indeed. It is now almost half a century since Arthur Calhoun produced his three-volume *Social History of the American Family,* and, though for its time it was a remarkable piece of work, it is now clearly unsatisfactory, both in its naive approach to social forces and in its inept synthesis of the materials. Calhoun's chapter on "The Career of the Child"[44] has almost no point of contact with the view of the inner-directed child presented by Riesman. Freedom of the child from parental control is the theme of Calhoun's chapter, and that freedom began before the Civil War. Almost all of his numerous excerpts from sources speak of the lack of discipline in the American family of the period and of the great attention and consideration given children by adults. This lack of discipline in the family is evident in Hugo Münsterberg's *American Traits,*[45] published at the turn of the century. His chapter on education in America seems to belie the picture of strictness of discipline and attention to the curriculum that Riesman spreads on his pages. Indeed, Münsterberg's chapter reads like Arthur Bestor discussing modern progressive education. The family is urged by Münsterberg to be stern enough to support the discipline of the school. And, as in our own time, the parents are strongly cautioned against complaining to the teacher that the amount of homework is excessive—a clear indication that parents were doing just that. At best such examples are no more than suggestive. One of the obvious tasks of social historians for the future would be a study of the American family in the age of

[42] *LC,* p. 100.

[43] Russell Lynes, *The Tastemakers* (New York, 1955), pp. 16-17.

[44] Arthur W. Calhoun, *A Social History of the American Family* (Cleveland, 1917-19), III, chap. 7.

[45] Hugo Münsterberg, *American Traits from the Point of View of a German* (Boston and New York, 1902), chap. 2.

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alleged inner-direction. At the moment, though, my suspicion is that the similarity of practices in the nineteenth century with those today in our so-called other-directed society would be startling and quite disturbing to those who discern a sharp social distinction between the two periods.

One of the distinctive marks of the other-directed society, Riesman asserts, is the self-restraint placed on the exercise of power.[46] By implication, then, the nineteenth century was the age when power was frankly and freely used. But was it? Certainly from the private correspondence of business leaders of the time we know that some men, in a position to do so, often refused to use their power. In his book *Railroad Leaders*, Thomas Cochran gives a striking example. In the 1850s, long before there were threats of government regulation, railroad presidents settled damage suits outside of court for more than was necessary merely to keep public good will[47]—just as a corporation might do today when other-direction and concern for consumers supposedly rule. Moreover, as Edward Kirkland has suggested, the much discussed robber barons were not as thick-skinned and steady of nerve as our conventional history makes them out to be.[48]

Perhaps the most significant insight that Riesman has brought to a comparison of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is that the former was concerned with production and the latter is largely oriented toward the consumer. In large part, that conception of the nineteenth century has been fostered by historians themselves, who, in their texts, have emphasized, in discussions of the economy, steel mill construction, railroad building and the like. Too often, though, they have ignored the enormous expansion of consumer industries in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century.

One piece of evidence for thinking that the late nineteenth-century economy was concerned with consumption is the boom in advertising. As David Potter has pointed out,[49] advertising is the classic institution of the consumer society. Advertising in newspapers alone tripled between 1867 and 1880 and then doubled by 1890. In 1900, almost $96 million was being spent on advertising in newspapers, an increase of over 1,000

[46] *LC*, pp. 246 ff.

[47] Thomas C. Cochran, *Railroad Leaders, 1845-1890* (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 157-58. W. H. Vanderbilt, it is true, said in a fit of pique, in 1882, "the public be damned," but a few years earlier he had written privately to a business associate, "we must be conservative and keep the public with us." At another time, according to Professor Cochran, he "recommended a minor change in policy because 'we don't want to get the public excited.'" *Ibid.*, p. 157.

[48] Edward Chase Kirkland, *Dream and Thought in the Business Community, 1860-1900* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1956), pp. 8-10.

[49] David M. Potter, *People of Plenty* (Chicago, 1954), chap. 8.

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per cent since 1867.[50] Many firms by the 1890s were already devoting substantial proportions of their revenues to advertising. Monarch bicycle, then in the midst of the advertising-created bicycle craze, spent between 4 and 5 per cent of its income on advertising; in the dry goods industry, 2.5 to 5 per cent was a common figure. Packaged cereals were the creation of advertising in the 1880s; thus it is not surprising that a reported 28 per cent of sales revenues went into advertising.[51] One contemporary authority on advertising in the period estimated that in 1898 something like half a billion dollars was spent on advertising in the United States each year.[52] Of a gross national product of about $17.3 billion, advertising thus constituted 2.8 per cent; in 1956, advertising expenditures were $9.9 billion in a GNP of $419 billion, or 2.4 per cent—a smaller proportion, it will be noted, than the figure for the late 1890s. The continuity between that period and our own is brought home by two examples of advertising. One was a complaint against advertising published in 1900: "Many are the instances in which the demand for new goods or for a particular brand of old goods has been built up from nothing by continuous advertising. The advertiser cultivates wants."[53] The other was a caption under an advertisement for porcelain-lined bathtubs in 1890. It read: "Ask your wife if she would like to bathe in a china dish, like her canary does."[54] When the percentages of GNP and lapses in grammar then and now are so similar, the differences between the periods cannot be as great as we have supposed.

The importance of advertising is one indication that attention to production was not the overriding consideration Riesman would lead us to believe; another is the history of consumer industries at the end of the nineteenth century. As Alfred Chandler Jr. has shown, the growth of a great firm like the American Tobacco Company under J. B. Duke was dependent upon close attention to the consumer. Tobacco production by the 1880s was far outrunning demand and only the reorganization of marketing procedures and large-scale advertising made possible the expansion of the business. Armour and Swift with their imaginative attention to distribution created a market for frozen beef where none existed before; William Clark, to name only one more of a number that could be cited, did the same for Singer Sewing Machine.[55] The emphasis on

50 Frank Presbrey, *The History and Development of Advertising* (Garden City, N. Y., 1929), p. 591.

51 Sidney A. Sherman, "Advertising in the United States," *Quarterly Publications* of the American Statistical Association, n. s. VII (December 1900), 154.

52 *Loc. cit.*

53 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

54 Presbrey, *History of Advertising*, p. 426.

55 Alfred D. Chandler Jr., "The Beginnings of 'Big Business' in American Industry," *Business History Review*, XXXIII (Spring 1959), 4-14.

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the consumer is further evident in the famous slogans and trademarks of the day, some of which are still potent and familiar and all of which were vital in the development of their respective enterprises: "99 44/100 Per Cent Pure," "Children Cry For It," "The Beer That Made Milwaukee Famous," "Uneeda Biscuit" and above all, Eastman's "Kodak," and the slogan, "You Press the Button and We Do the Rest." [56]

The question which this essay sought to answer was simply: "Is the picture of the nineteenth century which Riesman presents historically valid?" To that question, the answer must be "no." At the very least, Riesman confuses several tendencies of the nineteenth century. Thus the commitment to political activity of the Jacksonian era is projected without warrant through the rest of the century while the individualistic "the public be damned" stereotype of the robber baron of the 1880s is, equally without warrant, taken as typical of the American character in the previous seventy-five years. Furthermore, the historical evidence just does not sustain the kind of sharp division between the political, social and economic practices of the society of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; instead there is a marked continuity.

That conclusion, though, raises some further questions. That there are marked similarities between the social character of the two centuries suggests that perhaps the kind of categories that Riesman advances—inner-direction and other-direction—may be totally inadequate for purposes of historical analysis and should therefore be discarded. Riesman himself, by saying that the two character structures co-exist in both periods, has encouraged us, in a sense, to reach such a conclusion. Indeed, that admission has caused some historians to argue that his thesis, therefore, is not a historical thesis at all. But from the way that Riesman actually employs these terms in his book—he consistently, for example, attaches one of them to evidence drawn from the nineteenth century and the other to evidence from the twentieth—it is clear that he is dealing with change. And change is certainly one of the primary concerns of all historians. But, it might be objected, even if the historical character of Riesman's approach is conceded, can the historian validly use such broad categories to describe a nation that is made up of many different regions, classes and ethnic groups? Here, too, I think Riesman's approach must be judged worthwhile for the historian. The reason for thinking so, without going into any detail, is the same as that which justifies the conception of national character. Not all students of American society, to be sure,

[56] James Playsted Wood, *The Story of Advertising* (New York, 1948), pp. 263-64.

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accept that conception, but there certainly are a sufficient number who do to make it meaningful and worth exploring.[57]

If one accepts the concept of national character but rejects Riesman's assertion of a significant difference between the social character of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, what conclusion is one to draw? As has been suggested, the soundest conclusion seems to be that what Riesman has called the central feature of the modern American character—other-direction—is, in fact, the dominant element in our national character through most of our history. There may be some accentuation of certain aspects of it in our own time, but what Tocqueville designated in the 1830s as *"democratie"* is essentially what Riesman means by other-direction. Rather than a changing American character, the evidence suggests a remarkably stable one, at least since the early years of the nineteenth century.

Afternote

Soon after this article appeared, its conclusions were objected to by Cushing Strout, "A Note on Degler, Riesman and Tocqueville," *American Quarterly*, XVI (Spring, 1964), 100–2. The burden of Mr. Strout's criticism was that I had overemphasized the historical evidence for the continuity of social values and practices between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Mr. Strout's short note, however, did not include any new evidence for accepting the view that inner-direction was characteristic of nineteenth-century Americans. On the other hand, two articles published after Mr. Strout's and my pieces appeared seem to fortify the view that, in the area of child-rearing, nineteenth-century practices and attitudes were strikingly similar to those ascribed by Riesman to the twentieth century. See William E. Bridges, "Family Patterns and Social Values in America, 1824–1875," *American Quarterly*, XVII (Spring, 1965), 3–11 and Richard Rapson, "The American Child as Seen by British Travelers, 1845–1935," *American Quarterly*, XVII (Summer, 1965), 520–34.

Carl Degler is a Professor of History at Vassar College. [This article appeared in Vol. XV, No. 4 (Winter, 1963).]

[57] See, for example, Walter P. Metzger, "Generalizations about National Character. An Analytical Essay" in Louis Gottschalk (ed.), *Generalization in the Writing of History* (Chicago, 1963) and David M. Potter, *People of Plenty* (Chicago, 1954), Pt. I. In effect, also, Elting E. Morison (ed.), *The American Style* (New York, 1958) is a collection of papers assuming the existence of national character, though there it is called "style." See also Seymour Martin Lipset and Leo Lowenthal (eds.), *Culture and Social Character* (Glencoe, Ill., 1961) for an examination by sociologists and others of this question with particular reference to the work of Riesman.

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Cushing Strout

The Sun Also Sets: A Note on Degler, Riesman and Tocqueville[1]

TRADITIONALLY, THE HISTORIAN HAS BEEN UNEASY WITH THE SOCIOLOGICAL search for general laws because he is professionally sensitized to change and diversity. Recently, however, the sociologists, instead of hungering for laws of eternal verity, have been busy pointing up the peculiar features of American society, noting the subtle changes of quality in modern life, or measuring shifts in the national character. There has been a tendency for historians to react by delighting in showing that everything has a precedent, that what looks novel is really of long standing, that somebody years ago said everything worth saying about those contemporary problems that agitate sociological critics. In conversation I have often caught myself and my colleagues speaking in a certain tone of worldly wisdom which suggests the ripe knowledge that, though one generation passeth away and another generation cometh, the sun also rises. It is an ironical reversal of roles which ought to make historians uneasy.

As a historian, I appreciate Mr. Degler's concern for keeping sociological use of the past on documentary ground, but I suspect that his case for continuity is much too likely to win assent from historians for the wrong reasons. His argument fails to take seriously enough the difference in method between the historian and the sociologist, and it tends to blur the limiting conditions of the thesis presented in *The Lonely Crowd*. The authors use what Max Weber called "ideal types," which are not empirical descriptions but instruments of conceptual clarity, designed to point up for analytical purposes certain features of reality that might

[1] See Carl N. Degler, "The Sociologist as Historian: Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*," *American Quarterly*, XV (Winter 1963), 483–97. Because *American Quarterly* publishes comments on articles but discourages formal debates which might include a rejoinder, Professor Degler was not invited to reply.

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otherwise be imperceptible. The evidence presented is not intended to be representative in general; it is explicitly restricted to "the metropolitan, American upper middle class." Social character is taken to be only one dimension of personality, that is, the mode of conformity or creativity. Modern "other-direction" is crucially discriminated from conformist behavior in general by an emphasis on the quality of inner experience, rather than on overt behavior or rational opinion, and on the need for emotional rapport with "the good guys" rather than with "the best people." These nuances are the very essence of the case.

Tocqueville's concern for "the tyranny of the majority" was quite different from Riesman's analysis of "other-direction." The Frenchman believed that because the majority in America had the right of both making and executing the laws there was no freedom of discussion with respect to religious and political theory. It irritated him that "the ruling power" could not be "made game of," but had always to be made "the subject of encomium." There was a fading out of the old American "manly candor and masculine independence of opinion." What struck him forcibly was the persistence in the United States of "general principles in religion, philosophy, morality, and even politics. . . ."[1] Using his own method of "ideal types," for he confessed that he was looking in America for "the image of democracy itself," Tocqueville concluded that in coming generations the egalitarian society would be marked by a "virtuous materialism" that would end by regarding "every new theory as a peril, every innovation as an irksome toil, every social improvement as a stepping stone to revolution. . . ." (Cf. I, Chaps. XV and II, Chap. XXI.)[2] There is nothing inconsistent in this perceptive analysis with Riesman's thesis about the changing nature of social character in America.

The real point of contact between Tocqueville and Riesman lies in their mutual concern for the threat of what Tocqueville called "general apathy." He saw it as the result of the democrat's tendency — which he called "individualism" and Riesman called "privatization" — to "draw apart with his family and his friends, so that after he has thus formed a

[1] He finds majority tyranny "but slightly perceptible" in American politics whereas its effect on "the national character" is already "an unfavorable influence." (*Democracy in America*, Phillips Bradley edition, 1946, Vol. I, p. 266) Later he praises the moral and political consensus which limits freedom of discussion in America as benignly productive of "the tranquil rule of the majority" that *recognizes* the barriers above it of moral standards and vested rights. (I, 416)

[2] Tocqueville sees this isolation as especially marked when a democratic society is constructed upon the ruins of an aristocracy. But his point is that Americans have *avoided* that danger because they have "arrived at a state of democracy without having to endure a democratic revolution." (II, 98, 101) Hence the Riesman-hypothesis of a *change* in American social character is not inconsistent with Tocqueville's finding.

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little circle of his own, he willingly leaves society at large to itself." (*Democracy in America*, II, 98.) This common concern is emphasized not in *The Lonely Crowd*, but in Riesman's recent writings which stress the need for human solidarity and political commitment on large issues. It is relevant that all three authors of *The Lonely Crowd* are now currently committed to the peace movement.

Any study of discontinuity necessarily slights continuity. But can anything but a cult of continuity prevent us from appreciating the passing of the Newport style of conspicuous consumption, the growth of the corporate organization man, the new sanctions in a psychologically oriented age for the manipulation of personality, the mushrooming of public relations, the cult of consumership, the fact that "the business of America" is also play, or the political exploitation of "sincerity" and "tolerance"? These new features of our world were first seen in perspective by *The Lonely Crowd*, and they are not the *characteristic* features of Victorian America. The book itself was a striking sign of a changed temper. Its concern for the development of individual "autonomy" was couched in a sociological idiom marked by a critical attitude toward moral indignation and ideological commitment. How strange its categories appear by comparison with the ethical and religious individualism of Emerson and Thoreau, or the Puritanized laissez-faire economic individualism preached by William Graham Sumner, himself an impressive model of the "inner-directed" man!

As a historian, I should think that, instead of minimizing any changes in the social character of Americans, we might find it more profitable and appropriate to look into the 1920s as a seed-bed for those emphases in style which *The Lonely Crowd* has identified so vividly that we can no longer look at our own time without reference to its categories. No doubt the time is not yet for the scholarly lions and lambs to lie down together, but how better for historians could they begin to approach each other than by agreeing that the sun also sets?

Afternote

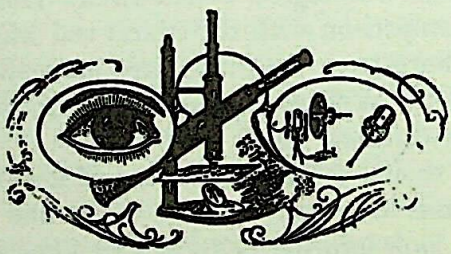
Even those historians who have stressed polar conflict in American history have been obsessed with continuity, finding the same conflict repeating itself throughout American history. See the new introduction to my *The Pragmatic Revolt in American History: Carl L. Becker and Charles A. Beard*, republished in paperback by Cornell University Press (1966). The historian needs a bifocal vision on continuity and discontinuity, as I tried to show in my *The American Image of the Old World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963) by taking a perspective which would mediate the argument between the consensus-

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historians and the conflict-historians. My sense of the relationship between Tocqueville and Riesman grew out of a valuable correspondence with David Riesman to whom I am much indebted. I have used the insights of both thinkers in a chapter, "Individuals Well-Organized," in Stanley Coben and Lorman Ratner, eds., *Essays in American Culture*, to be published by Prentice-Hall.

Cushing Strout is a Professor of English at Cornell University. [This article appeared in Vol. XVI, No. 1 (Spring, 1964).]



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William G. McLoughlin

Pietism and the American Character[1]

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ESSAY IS TO OFFER A PERSONAL HYPOTHESIS FOR WHAT may be unique, if anything is, about the American character. And if I can demonstrate that the quality of pietism (or, in its broader formulation, pietistic-perfectionism) offers at least as many useful insights into the nature of the American experience as, say, the quality of pragmatism or of democratic liberalism or the influence of the frontier, then I will have made my point. While I am aware that in offering such a "key" I am in danger of explaining so much as to explain nothing, I prefer to leave the inevitable qualifications and exceptions to another time. I will say for this generalized approach only that the present stage in the renascence of the history of religion[2] in America seems to me to merit its consideration.

American pietism had its origin in the protest of Protestantism against the ecclesiastical corruptions of the Christian church in the sixteenth century. Ernst Troeltsch, the German historian of religion, defined this dissenting spirit in terms of the sect-type versus the church-type of Christianity. And he listed as the salient features of the pietistic temper, its anti-institutionalism, its voluntarism, its exaltation of the individual's direct relationship with God, its aspiration "after personal inward perfection," its hostility to worldliness and the kinds of compromise which the established church-type systems have to make with the state, and its doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Pietism, said Troeltsch, disliked

[1] This paper was read at the annual meeting of the New England American Studies Association at Amherst College, October 24, 1964.

[2] I use the term "religion" here not only in its narrow sense but in the broader sense as defined by J. L. Talmon: "The concrete elements of history, the acts of politicians, the aspirations of people, the ideas, values, preferences and prejudices of an age, are the outward manifestations of its religion in the widest sense." *The Rise of Totalitarian Democracy* (Boston, 1952), p. 11.

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the relativistic aspects of the natural law as taught by the medieval scholastics, and substituted for it "the plain Law of Christ or the Sermon on the Mount." To the pietist, "God's Being and Will constitute His Natural and Revealed Law; the Bible is the Law-book of revelation, identical with the Law-book of Nature." [3]

Troeltsch pointed out that there were several types of pietism, and he made a sharp distinction between the mystical or quietistic pietism of Continental Europe and the activistic, aggressive, reform-minded temper of English Puritanism. The mystical pietism of the Continent left the world up to the State and so tended to remain static and agrarian; it was a religion of withdrawal. The activistic pietism of the Puritans gave to the Church the duty of reforming the world and so launched into liberalism in politics and capitalism in economics; it was a religion of commitment. Puritan pietism in England took many forms, but all of them (including the Separatist, Baptist and Quaker varieties which played so important a role in America) were animated by perfectionist ideals:

> Its 'Perfectionist' aim of separating 'converted' Christians . . . from the rest in order to form them into smaller groups of real Christians, its stress on the need for 'converted' preachers, its emphasis upon lay religion and upon the pure apostolic primitive Church, revealed a spirit which was still inwardly hostile to the spirit of ecclesiasticism . . . the greatest impulse towards reform lay in the idea of the coming Kingdom of God and the approaching world transformation.[4]

As H. Richard Niebuhr put it in *Christ and Culture,* American Puritans, Separatists, Quakers, Methodists and Baptists believed in Christ as "the transformer of culture" and "as the regenerator of man in his culture." [5]

Now my hypothesis (and I want to make it clear that it is mine only as a gloss upon that other seminal work of Niebuhr's, *The Kingdom of God in America*) rests upon the contention that it was this dynamic, sectarian form of pietistic-perfectionism which lies at the basis of American civilization, although since 1776 the orthodox Christian version of this pietism has been challenged by various post-Christian versions. From the beginning of our history the New World attracted those who shared the basic assumptions of this outlook and who crossed the ocean in a quest for a new start, a more complete freedom, in a land where perfection itself seemed possible. Frederick Jackson Turner no doubt exaggerated the environmental contribution when he talked of American democracy's

[3] Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches,* trans. Olive Wyon (London, 1931), I, 344, 347; II, 677 ff.

[4] *Ibid.,* II, 716.

[5] H. R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, 1951), p. 220.

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coming out of the forest to greet and transform the immigrant. But he was correct in seeing the virgin land and uncorrupted social order as a prime catalytic agent in shaping the pietistic-perfectionism brought by the immigrant, into genuinely new and different institutional forms.

It was not the forest or the free land, however, which broke down those remnants of the European civilization which the pietists brought with them. What broke down the stratified class system, the established church, the mercantile economic practices, the corporate concept of society, was the internal dynamic of pietistic-perfectionism itself. For there is an inherent tension within pietism, as well as between the varieties of pietism that came to America, which has generated a continual spirit of reformation, a constant search for a more perfect union between God and man in America from the outset. As Richard Niebuhr pointed out in 1937, and as Edmund S. Morgan recently emphasized in *The Puritan Dilemma,* this inherent tension or conflict within the pietistic-perfectionist outlook may be phrased (as Niebuhr generally put it) in terms of the conflict between the Puritan and the Quaker or (as Professor Morgan put it) between the Non-Separatist Congregationalist and the Separatist. For my purposes it is clearer to see it as a conflict between the conservative and the antinomian aspects of pietism—between those whose primary concern is to maintain perfect moral order and those whose primary concern is to attain perfect moral freedom. This tension was central to the attempt to found a nation dedicated to the proposition that the moral law of God and Nature is supreme, and that all men owe their first and fundamental allegiance to that law rather than to their families, their community or to the state. And the dilemma posed for the pietists who sought to construct the New Jerusalem in America's green and promised land had two sides: first, how do I get myself into harmony with the moral law, and second, how do I translate that law into action without curtailing the freedom of others? Or, in other words, the dilemma of personal responsibility for purity and social responsibility for order, for transforming myself and my society into that state of perfection which God requires on earth even as it is in heaven.

The pietistic dilemma was posed in classic terms by the confrontations which Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams posed to John Winthrop and John Cotton: Hutchinson, the antinomian true to the Spirit of God within her heart, and Williams, the Separatist and Seeker for absolute conformity to God's law, both refused to compromise with the Non-Separatist and restrictive regulations of the Bible Commonwealth, which, as they saw it, enforced conformity to a corrupt social and ecclesiastical order. The solution to such pietistic confrontations was simple in the 1630s. Williams and Hutchinson, and those who rebelled with them,

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simply were told that if they did not like the civilization of Massachusetts Bay they could make their own lively experiment in pietistic-perfectionism in the wilderness. For two and a half centuries thereafter a host of antinomian pietists in America continually moved out to the greater freedom of the frontier whenever, like Natty Bumppo or Huck Finn, they felt the restrictions of civilization encroaching upon their moral freedom.

But not all of them moved. By the end of the seventeenth century the Quakers and Baptists had broken down the rigid exclusionist conformity of the religious establishments North and South and maintained their uncompromising attitudes toward a corrupt system in a mild state of siege called toleration. For more than a century the two wings of American pietism remained in constant tension over their differing views of a Christian society. The conservative pietists insisted, for example, that a Christian state required some official recognition of and support for the Christian churches. The Separatists, led by the Baptists, argued that for the state to support Christianity, even by a general assessment tax which aided all Protestant denominations, was infringing upon the freedom of the churches and of the individual conscience. And the Baptists repeatedly refused to obey the laws in this matter. Eventually the conservatives yielded the point, though not without first claiming that the supporters of disestablishment were subversives, agents of the Bavarian Illuminati, seeking to overthrow republican government in order to set up Jacobinical atheism and mob rule.

It is a basic difference between European and American civilizations that disestablishment was not engineered in this country by atheistic *philosophes* shouting "*Ecrasez l'infâme!*" but by evangelical pietists shouting "Freedom of religion!" The defenders of the establishment, like Lyman Beecher, eventually realized to their great surprise, that disestablishment had been undertaken to free America *for* religion and not *from* religion. By the middle of the nineteenth century Roman Catholics in America recognized too the great benefits which derived to their church from the principle of separation of Church and State, though Cardinal Gibbons had to explain again and again to a puzzled Vatican that disestablishment was not secularism in the European sense.

Apart from the tensions over disestablishment, the two wings of pietism (Puritan and Separatist, or Conservative and Antinomian) which constituted the vital core of the American temper, managed to work together toward the implementation of their mutual ideals. Together they fought against the outworn, corrupt, man-made restrictions upon freedom which were associated with the decadent civilization and corrupt churches of the Old World. Having thrown off the shackles of an Erastian, hierarchichal state-church system by the very act of coming to America, they pro-

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ceeded to attack the economic and political tyranny of hereditary monarchy; at the same time they gradually abolished the restrictions of a static corporate society with its fixed class system and its state-controlled economy. And ultimately, having erected both state and federal constitutions which imbedded the moral law into the written law of the land, they gradually established the complete equality of all white men under God through universal manhood suffrage and rotation in office. The concept of the omni-competent, self-governing, self-reliant common man was really the final triumph of the first stage of American pietistic-perfectionism. In the Age of Jackson the two interacting components of pietistic-perfectionism flowered in unison: inner perfection or holiness as personal union with God and the perfectibility of the world through the regeneration of everyone in it. America had at last thrown off all the shackles of Satan and all the carnal corruptions of this world and was now ready for the ultimate confrontation with God. In 1836 Charles Grandison Finney, the foremost evangelist of his day and later president of Oberlin College in its perfectionist era, predicted that it would be possible to convert "the whole land in two years." [6] At the same time a Baptist layman named William Miller was persuading thousands of Americans that the millennium would begin on March 21, 1843. Both predictions were premature.

The triumph of Jacksonian democracy marked a new crisis in American pietism just when the millennium seemed at hand. Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out the danger to moral freedom lurking in the potential tyranny of the majority which Jacksonian democracy made possible. Had the pietists recognized the logic of their striving for complete equality under God they might have foreseen this threat. Instead, they had cast aside the cautious checks and balances which the conservative pietists who founded the federal system had set up to prevent such a possibility.[7] They cast it aside not only by expanding the electorate and creating political parties directly responsible to it, but also by changing the theological rationale for rule by the elite. It is significant that the most

[6] *Letters of Theodore Weld, Angelina Grimke Weld, and Sarah Grimke,* eds. G. H. Barnes and D. L. Dumond (New York, 1934) I, 318-19.

[7] See the opening chapter in Richard Hofstadter's *The American Political Tradition* in which he points out that "there is a serious dilemma in the philosophy of the Fathers" of the Constitution: "They thought man was a creature of rapacious self-interest and yet they wanted him to be free." Like the Puritans, they tried to balance man's freedom as a moral agent against his depravity as a sinner. They did it by granting the principle of government by consent of the governed and then checking its majority will. They did it also by placing moral absolutes in the Bill of Rights against which the majority might not act. They rejected Thomas Paine's radical pietistic notion that the people has a right to do whatever it chooses to do because its voice is the voice of God.

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radical of the revolutionary state constitutions were written in places like Pennsylvania and Vermont where antinomian pietists predominated, while the most conservative state constitutions were established in Connecticut and Massachusetts where Calvinistic pietists predominated. The gradual triumph of Arminianism over Calvinism in the latter half of the eighteenth century and early part of the nineteenth century was the theological side of the political shift toward democracy. The First Great Awakening began this shift in a pietistic revolt against the declining fervor of a decadent Calvinism and the corrupting influence of the rising Enlightenment. But by emphasizing immediate, crisis conversion through emotional itinerant preaching, the Awakening shifted the whole emphasis of Calvinism in the direction of Separatist pietism. Not only did the Awakening seriously undermine the established church system throughout the colonies but it also undermined the conception of a learned clergy and of rule by the predestined elect. In the evangelistic fervor engendered by the Awakening, pietists of all kinds gradually abandoned the emphasis on a limited atonement and worked their way toward the doctrines of free will, free grace and immediate salvation open to all men. By the end of the eighteenth century the unique American systems of itinerant evangelism and mass revivalism had evolved to provide the techniques for regenerating a whole society (and through missionaries, the whole world).

During the Second Great Awakening the conservative pietists of the East gradually merged with the more radical pietists of the frontier in the efforts to get all of the unwashed masses washed in the Blood of the Lamb before deism, Unitarianism and Jacobinical mob rule put an end to the concept of a Christian commonwealth. This theological merger of Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Separatists and Methodists produced Evangelical pietism; and evangelical pietists believed that a Christian commonwealth could be achieved through the massing of the votes of the regenerate to make "a Christian Party in politics." These voters would elect only converted Christians to office and these legislators in turn would enact and enforce Christian morality throughout the nation. Thus revivalism replaced the establishment as the American method of maintaining moral order without (it was thought) abandoning moral freedom. Or, to put it another way, the evangelical Protestant denominations became a kind of national church dedicated to enforcing the moral law upon everyone in the nation either by revivalistic religion (which produced voluntary obedience) or by a majority vote of the regenerate (which compelled obedience of the unregenerate). However, in their zeal to make America a Christian country the evangelicals began to equate the moral absolute with their own narrow set of Protestant, mid-

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dle-class, rural virtues. They wanted to outlaw the Masons and the Mormons, to enact nativist laws, to enforce prohibition, to censor immorality, to prevent birth control, to maintain a Christian Sabbath, and eventually to restrict immigration and pass laws preventing the teaching of evolution.

With this transformation of the radical pietism of the Separatists or antinomians into the narrow conformity which eventually became Fundamentalism, a new form of pietism emerged to offset it. And this we may call the post-Christian form of American pietism. But it is important to note that post-Christian pietism is by no means anti-Christian. The anti-Christian or anticlerical thought of Thomas Paine was never a significant force in American life. The real basis of post-Christian pietism in America was the Jeffersonian adaptation of the moral sense philosophy of the Scottish Realists. Thomas Jefferson made Scottish intuitionalism, the innate moral faculty in all men, the basis of his faith in democracy. He did so as a means of preserving the moral freedom of the individual against what he considered the theocentric authoritarianism of the established priestcraft.[8] He saw the evangelical Calvinism of Timothy Dwight and Lyman Beecher as the spiritual arm of the political paternalism of the Federalist Party, and he was not far wrong. Jefferson, in my view, qualifies as the first post-Christian pietist not only because he joined the movement for disestablishment and opposed the moralistic pretensions of the evangelicals, but also because he did so in the name of preserving the teachings of Jesus against those who would pervert them into their own ideological blueprint for a conformist society. His attack upon the authoritarianism of the Calvinist Federalists was carried on by Emerson's fight against the paternalistic pretensions of the Unitarian Whigs. And just as Timothy Dwight of Yale saw Jeffersonianism as Jacobinical atheism, so Andrews Norton of Harvard saw Emersonian Transcendentalism as "the latest form of infidelity."

The post-Christian pietism of Jefferson differed from that of Emerson more in degree than in quality. Both men were equally committed to moral freedom through adherence to moral law; both believed in the trustworthiness of the heart and conscience of the average man. Everyone is familiar with Jefferson's famous statement concerning the moral equality, if not superiority, of the plowman ("Nature's nobleman") in comparison with the professor. Let me quote a less well-known statement which Jefferson made to his nephew, Peter Carr, in 1787, on the same subject:

[8] For Jefferson's use of the Scottish Realists see Adrienne Koch, *The Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1943), pp. 15-22, 45-53.

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> Give up money, give up fame, give up science, give up the earth itself and all it contains, rather than do an immoral act. . . . An honest heart being the first blessing, a knowing head is the second.

What is this but a paraphrase of the Biblical injunction, "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" I wonder too whether Orestes Brownson had not been reading Jefferson when he wrote in the *Democratic Review* in 1840 against Andrews Norton's learned attack upon Transcendentalism:

> All are capable of judging of the doctrine [of the New Testament] itself, whether it be of God or not. The unlettered ploughman by this is placed, so far as the evidences of his religious faith are concerned, on a level with the most erudite scholar or the profoundest philosopher. Christianity by this is adapted to the masses. . . . It recognises a witness within the soul that testifies for God. . . . It paves the way for universal freedom, for every man to become a priest and a king. . . [9]

This then is the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian-Emersonian reformulation of the pietistic doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. By this exaltation of the moral sense, conscience or intuition, democracy could be based upon the universal suffrage of the common man. And thus there was a new pietistic counterpoise, or countervailing power, to the Christian party in politics; i.e., post-Christian pietism. While this reliance upon the voice of the people as the voice of God was as liable to majority tyranny as the combined vote of the evangelical saints, it offered a more viable alternative for the rebellion of the individual heart. It became the basis of a new form of antinomianism. And it was to this iron string of self-reliant individualism that Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman tuned their message. It was to "the honest heart" that the reformers, the utopians, the abolitionists of the day offered their manifold panaceas and received a response which made the era the most nonconformist in our history. Except insofar as the abolition movement captured the American people, it may be said that the individualistic antinomian perfectionists and the evangelical conservative perfectionists fought each other to a stand-off in the years 1830-60.

After the Civil War the second stage of American pietistic-perfectionism commenced. The pendulum had swung as far as it could go toward individual freedom through self-reliant anti-institutionalism. Now it had to go back to the social ethic of the general welfare in order to preserve the moral law and individual freedom. In the industrial revolution following 1860, self-reliance and equal opportunity hardened into the rigid

[9] Quoted in *The Transcendentalists*, ed. Perry Miller (Cambridge, 1950), p. 246.

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determinism of Spencer's social Darwinism (though it was a characteristically American optimistic and melioristic determinism). The pietistic individualism of Emerson was perverted into a defense of rugged individualism behind which the self-made plutocrats could hide their new form of oligarchic control. Reformation was baffled by a dogmatic insistence upon the Jeffersonian doctrine of laissez faire. The evangelical denominations, now firmly entrenched as a national establishment, even appropriated Darwin's evolutionary hypothesis to the service of a Christian conservatism under the phrase, "Evolution is God's way of doing things."

The new danger of institutionalized tyranny in the complexities of urban industrialism, personified as "Big Business" and "Big Labor," offered the countervailing pietist no alternative but to invoke the power of a benevolent government to smash or regulate the new threats to moral freedom. In the third of America's great awakenings, pietism was reformulated in the churches by the Social Gospelers in the ideals of Christian socialism. They awakened American consciences to the moral evils of the industrial system by calling upon them to apply "the social teachings of Jesus" to free those crushed by "the malefactors of great wealth." However, the Populist, Labor and Progressive reformers, taking a different tack, utilized Hamiltonian means to achieve Jeffersonian ends. Just as Jacksonian pietists crushed "the monster bank" in order to destroy a monopoly which was denying freedom of opportunity to the common man, so the Progressives attacked "the vested interests," "the soul-less corporations," "the demons of Wall Street" with a fervor that was often as heedless of consequences as the abolition movement. And as Richard Hofstadter has shown, these pietistic reformers revealed their evangelical origins by their support of the Fundamentalist William Jennings Bryan and of the Prohibition movement in the rural areas, as well as by their support of Woodrow Wilson, the most pietistic of all our Presidents, in the urban areas.

Shortly after the Social Gospel triumphs of the New Deal, it became apparent that government bureaucracy itself was now an institutional threat to liberty—especially when "Big Government" became the partner of "Big Business" and "Big Labor." The tension between the desire for moral order and moral freedom reached a state of desperation after World War II and unleashed a new pietistic revival which has been with us ever since. Conservative pietists not only judged "Bigness" wrong in itself, but they found evidence of atheistic Communism (like the Bavarian Illuminati) in all aspects of our huge and complicated social structure—in our State Department, in our labor unions, in our philanthropic foundations, in our army, even in our Supreme Court and our

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churches. In order to save our souls and our society these conservative (usually ultra-conservative) pietists urged a complete dismantling of Bigness in order to return America to the days of free labor, free enterprise and laissez-faire government.

At the other extreme, the antinomian pietists in the postwar awakening emphasized that Big Government and Big Labor had forgotten their original purpose — social justice for the weak; instead they were crushing individual liberty by failing to uphold the moral absolutes of the Bill of Rights and by putting institutional goals above personal needs and rights. The institutions of government and labor had become as corrupt and overbearing as Big Business or the old established church system of the past. Some religious leaders, discouraged by the results of the Social Gospel and inspired by the European theology called neo-orthodoxy, evolved a new form of pietistic radicalism which combined the old moral absolutes with a new sociological relativism. This sophisticated neo-pietism, of which Reinhold Niebuhr was the foremost exponent, revitalized the churches and spilled over to recall the post-Christian nonchurchgoers to their traditional values. One group of neo-pietists looked to the Supreme Court to challenge Bigness in the name of the moral law imbedded in the Bill of Rights; and they filled the ranks of organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union and the A.D.A. Another group, aroused by the moral implications of the atom bomb, formed organizations to crusade for disarmament and a sane nuclear policy. And in the midst of this new concern for freedom the Negro Revolution exploded, producing movements like Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, James Farmer's Congress of Racial Equality, and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee where Christian and non-Christian pietists demonstrated anew the depth of the antinomian tradition of civil disobedience in America. Simultaneously the creation of the Peace Corps awakened again the dedicated fervor and personal commitment of the nineteenth-century foreign missionaries among a younger generation thought to be lost in ennui or the search for security. Faced with the most fearful and baffling difficulties of their history, Americans took courage from their pietistic faith that he who would save his life must lose it in a cause beyond himself.[10]

[10] It is possible to make out a case for the continuity of the tension between the Puritan concept of the organic or corporate state as opposed to the antinomian concept of Christian anarchy throughout our history. One can cite the Whig concept of a Christian party in politics, the theocratic belief in stewardship through benevolent societies and even the utopian experiments in communal living as evidence for this before the Civil War. It is even easier after 1865 to point to the concept of Christian socialism and ultimately of the welfare state as embodying this organic view of society in opposition to the increasingly atomistic view of society. But while this form of the

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What I am trying to say in this rather awkward and cursory glance at American history and the pietistic awakenings and reformulations that have shaped it, is that the dialectic of pietism is a continuous spiral around the moral core of our cultural ethic. What is to the left of the core from one angle of vision or in one generation is at the right in the next. In any given period there are conservative and antinomian pietists striving to apply the values of this moral core to maintain the balance between personal integrity and social justice, between the maintenance of moral order and the attainment of moral freedom, as God or an honest heart gives them to see the right. But what is always central to the quest for perfection in America is the proper interpretation of "the moral law" which, as Emerson said, "lies at the center of nature and radiates to the circumference."

While generalizations about such a variable tradition as pietism are hazardous, nevertheless I will venture this definition of its essential characteristics: American pietism is the belief that every individual is himself responsible for deciding the rightness or wrongness of every issue (large or small) in terms of a higher moral law; that he must make this decision the moment he is confronted with any question in order to prevent any complicity with evil; and having made his decision, he must commit himself to act upon it at once, taking every opportunity and utilizing every possible method to implement his decision not only for himself and in his own home or community, but throughout the nation and the world.[11]

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dialectic between moral order and moral freedom is in some ways more consistent than the one I offer here, it also involves a serious shift or inversion of the respective roles of the anti-institutional antinomian reformer and the conservative defender of institutionalized order. One can claim that through men like Bushnell and Munger and Gladden the Puritan and Edwardsian conception of the Christian commonwealth carries through logically into the twentieth century. But this makes the Social Gospeler the defender of institutionalized organic order instead of a radical reformer interested primarily in individual freedom; it ignores the direct line "from Edwards to Emerson" which Perry Miller has described. It ignores too the equally distinct line from, say, Endicott to the Mathers to the Beechers and to the Fundamentalists whose conception of a Christian commonwealth was repressive and conformist and the very opposite of the "liberal" aspects of the Social Gospel and the New Deal.

[11] I do not want to imply here that the pietistic quality of American life produces only honest and straightforward moralistic appraisals or rationales for our actions. On the contrary, our pietism forces us to make (or enables us to indulge in) moralistic defenses of even the most immoral actions: slavery was God's will and a positive good; imperialism on the American continent or abroad was "manifest destiny" and "the White Man's burden." It would probably be fair to say that because of its intense pietism America has produced more hypocrisy per square soul than almost any other civilization in Christendom. The classic example of this was the inversion of the Protestant ethic into the success myth which concluded that the poor were poor because they deserved to be poor—they lacked industry, sobriety, thrift and piety. Similarly,

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Any attempt to define precisely the moral law or to enumerate Americans' moral absolutes either in terms of the revealed will of God or the natural rights of man is not only impossible but really beside the point. Pietism is a state of mind and not a fixed ideology, which explains why America has been spared the more baneful consequences of European totalitarian democracy. No one man, no group and no ideology has the blueprint for our society—not even the Bible has been a blueprint though some groups have tried to make their interpretation of it into one. It is the heart of American pietism that the individual is considered the single most competent judge of moral truth and that his judgment is to be respected even if it leads him into civil disobedience. The pietists who framed the Constitution organized this nation and its institutions as an open and not a closed society. True pietists (the pietists of the vital center, whether conservative-Puritan or antinomian-Separatist) have never claimed to know the complete will of God. In fact, it is one of their fundamental tenets that God is continually revealing himself in new ways and shedding yet "further light" upon his will: I Corinthians 4:5, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." [12] The self-righteous, rightwing fanatic (not to be confused with the Puritan conservative pietist) who equates the moral law with "the American way of life" is just as heretical to the true spirit of pietism as the leftwing fanatic (not to be confused with the antinomian pietist) who equates it with Marxian socialism. Neither of these is really seeking further light either for moral order or moral freedom. They have in fact closed their minds to it. Or, as Reinhold Niebuhr put it, they have "absolutized the relative." Yet even these potential totalitarians in America, whether of the left or right, are still more appropriately described as aberrant pietists rather than as atheistic Marxists or proto-Fascists.

But if pietism is the key to the American character, what about the many claims that America is a materialistic and secular civilization? Despite the fact that Americans seem to have devoted as much of their talent, wealth and energy to perfecting their means of production and distribution of creature comforts as they have to perfecting their personal

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labor unions were attacked in the name of "freedom of contract" or "the right to work," and fair housing laws for Negroes are voted down in the name of "the sanctity of private property." But to point out the extent of American hypocrisy is not to deny the prevalence of American pietism but to confirm it.

[12] See also John 16:12-13: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth."

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or social morality, the charge that we are a materialistic nation simply will not hold water. Almost all intelligent European observers who have come to know America have perceived this. The philosopher George Santayana, who lived here during the height of the Gilded Age, characterized Americans as "extreme idealists in the region of hope." The average American, he said, is "an idealist working on matter." The American does not respect or admire money as the Europeans do simply in and for itself; money to them is to be used, not hoarded. Wealth is important not for itself but for what it can do to improve the world:

> The American talks about money, because that is the symbol and measure he has at hand for success, intelligence, and power; but as to money itself, he makes, loses, spends, and gives it away with a very light heart.[13]

Americans have always maintained a pietistic dislike for the idle rich, for conspicuous consumption, for the spendthrift or the man who wastes either his money or his talent. We have admired those businessmen most who have given their money away most freely for philanthropic ends; we have made social work a profession. And our willingness to support such international charity as Lend-Lease, the Marshall Plan, Point Four, foreign aid and the Peace Corps indicates a similar sense of stewardship toward the world. Our cynicism about money and philanthropy is only a veneer to hide our do-goodism. I once heard the president of Brown University say when he was seeking money from a wealthy businessman, *"Pecunia non olit";* but he would never have said it had he not recognized that Americans still fear, as Washington Gladden feared Rockefeller's gift to his denomination, that money ("filthy lucre") may be "tainted" by the manner in which it is earned. It is fortunate for our own sense of stewardship that the nations of the world which accept our gifts do not feel as Gladden did about how we made our money.

It is just as inaccurate to say that America is a "secular" culture as it is to say that it is materialistic. The United States Supreme Court (in the person of Justice William O. Douglas) has told us, and we have no higher authority on earth to justify ourselves, that America is a religious nation founded upon a belief in God. We exempt our churches from taxation as we do our philanthropic and educational enterprises because we wish to encourage them. And if we take Bible reading and prayer out of the public schools, it is from the same desire to protect the spiritual freedom of our children and churches from the compromising power of the State

[13] George Santayana, *Character and Opinion in the United States* (Anchor paperback, 1956), pp. 108, 109, 115.

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which motivated disestablishment, though most Americans are still fearful lest public education become "irreligious" or "amoral." We will no doubt find a method (through "released time" or "shared time" or some other plan) to inculcate religion and morality concurrently with the so-called secular subjects.

The same moralistic and pietistic temper has always inspired our political life. There has scarcely been an election in American history since 1796 which was not conducted as a fight between good and evil for the power to steer the ship of state toward the millennial harbor. If the Jeffersonians were considered atheistic Jacobins, the Federalists were considered power-hungry monarchists and defenders of a corrupt established-church system. If the Whigs were monopolistic plutocrats defending a monster bank, the Jacksonians were barbarian demagogues wrecking the economy. The South saw Lincoln as the tyrant of the North and Republicans saw the South as betrayers of the rights of man. In the 1880s the liberal Republican Mugwumps campaigned against the corruptions of the Grant administration; in the 1890s the Democrats thought they were about to be crucified upon "a Cross of Gold," and in 1912 Theodore Roosevelt said of the Bull Moose Party, "We stand at Armageddon and battle for the Lord." Franklin Roosevelt called his "New Deal" a crusade for human dignity, while Herbert Hoover called it the road to serfdom. Dwight D. Eisenhower and Barry Goldwater campaigned against a corrupt mess of men in Washington who were soft on Communism, while Stevenson and Johnson have insisted that only their party is able to maintain the peace and to care for the poor.

Now it may be argued that regardless of campaign slogans the American two- (or four-) party system is essentially a compromise system and that most of the professional business of politics either in the smoke-filled room or the cloakrooms of the state and federal capitals is done on a very hard-headed basis of lobbying, logrolling and political back-scratching. It might even be argued that the doctrinaire politics of the multi-party systems of Europe are more morally rigid than American politics. But the weight of these arguments is really the other way around. Doctrinaire political parties are immoral by American pietistic standards because they insist that all politicians and party members vote not as their consciences tell them but as their party line tells them. American political parties, while resting upon compromise between the pietistic extremes of right and left, are nevertheless dedicated to the belief that the compromise itself is the only right and just course toward the millennium. Once the party conventions are over, the party platforms (no matter how they were hammered out) become the voice of God and of the people whose will they represent. We believe that it is the conscience of the people

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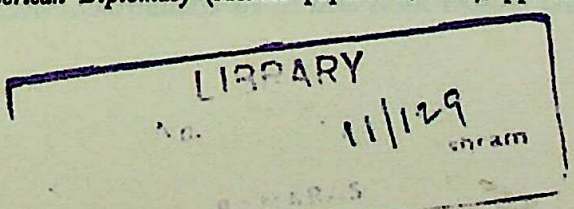
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which makes our party platforms and not any doctrinaire party dictator hewing to a rigid political ideology. The logrolling and lobbying and back-scratching in Washington are grimly tolerated as the only apparent means in this corrupt world of getting the nation to move forward without trampling too heavily on someone's freedom (the virtue of the filibuster). Nevertheless, there are strict limitations upon "politicking" beyond which the politician moves only at the risk of being "exposed" for corrupt and immoral betrayal of his "public trust." The business of politics in America is conducted on the razor-thin edge of public moralism and scarcely a month goes by that some politician does not fall off that edge into permanent ruin and disgrace. (Has there ever been an election without a Sherman Adams, a Harry Vaughn or a Bobby Baker?) In fact, the essential characteristic of all American political campaigning, whether for dog-catcher or for the presidency, is the fact that the voter is, or ought to be, disgusted with the rascality of the incumbent. "The professional" is simply the man who can get the most done without staining his moral image sufficiently to fail of re-election. We respect but do not love the political "pro" because we think "politics is dirty."

European observers have shuddered at the religious fervor of American election campaigns only slightly less than they have shuddered at what George Kennan rightly called our "legalistic-moralistic approach" to foreign policy. This approach, said Kennan, is "the carrying over into the affairs of states of the concepts of right and wrong, the assumption that state behavior is a fit subject for moral judgment." And because Americans pietistically believe that there is a moral law which is binding for nations in the same way as for individuals, they also believe in punishing to the fullest extent the criminal nation which breaks that law. Hence our conception of total war, total surrender, total victory. We clothe our "military efforts in the language of idealism," said Kennan, and refuse "to admit the validity and legitimacy of power realities and aspirations, to accept them without feeling the obligation of moral judgment." [14]

And so the defeat of the Southern rebellion in 1861 was a moral question, the repayment of Allied war debts in the 1920s was a moral question, the admission of Communist China to the United Nations is a moral question, the defense of Formosa, Quemoy, Matsu, Viet Nam is a moral question, the granting of foreign aid to Yugoslavia, Poland, India, is a moral question, the whole problem of coexistence with "criminal," atheistic, promise-breaking Communism is a moral question. And any president who fails to see matters in this light, who acts on the

[14] George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy* (Mentor paperback, 1951), pp. 55, 66, 73, 93-94, 98.



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ground that more is at stake than making a moralistic judgment about right and wrong in such affairs, runs the risk, as Lincoln and Kennedy did, of producing profound distrust, fear, anger and hatred among Americans.

In short, there is no area of American life which is free from our pietistic concern; none in which the pietistic attitude is not a significant factor.

So much for the exposition of my hypothesis. Now let me conclude by making a few brief applications of it. If we are a nation of pietists, then, this hypothesis must apply to Roman Catholics and Jews as well as to Protestants. It must also apply to our arts and letters as well as to our politics. It must apply to the daily life of the average man as well as to our thinkers and doers.

In regard to the Roman Catholics and Jews, I have already intimated that the measure of their Americanism or acculturation in their own eyes, as well as in that of historians and sociologists, has been the extent to which they have imbibed the temper of American pietism. Or perhaps it would be more fair to say that America has heightened in these more recent immigrants the pietistic-perfectionism inherent in our shared Judeo-Christian tradition. Will Herberg, while he seems to me to underestimate American pietism, rightly sees very little difference today between the outlooks of the three major groups, Protestant, Catholic, Jew; their growing ecumenical fraternalism bears this out. For example, a few months ago Cardinal Cushing gave his hearty endorsement to Billy Graham and urged all Roman Catholics to attend his meetings. And it would be difficult to find much basic disagreement among the messages presented by Joshua Liebman in his book, *Peace of Mind,* by Billy Graham in *Peace with God* or Fulton Sheen in *Peace of Soul.* All three of them bear striking resemblances also to that other recent best-seller, Norman Vincent Peale's *Power of Positive Thinking.*

It is not strange that the Reform movement in Judaism found such compatible surroundings in America in the latter part of the nineteenth century and that Rabbi Stephen S. Wise became one of the leading figures in the Social Gospel movement. I should guess too that the strength of the Zionist movement in this country owes something to the millennial and utopian tradition of American perfectionism, though on its own terms Zionism belongs more nearly to the conservative pietism of the Puritan Bible Commonwealth or Brigham Young's Mormon Zion than to the antinomian pietism of the Oneida Community or Brook Farm.

The liberal wing of the Roman Catholic Church in America is comparable to Reform Judaism in its adoption of American Progressive and Social Gospel ideas and in its commitment over the years to education,

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labor reform and religious toleration. In the late nineteenth century American pietistic principles so far invaded the Catholic Church here under the evangelistic impetus of Isaac Hecker and Orestes Brownson (aided and abetted by Cardinal Gibbons and Archbishop Ireland) that the Pope felt obliged to condemn what he considered the heresy of "Americanism" though he was as wrong as Lyman Beecher had been to see a threat to religious faith in Hecker's pietistic principles.[15] Catholic liberals have tried to make some compromise with the American public school system and today it is possible to find Catholics working in the American Civil Liberties Union to prevent federal aid to private schools out of the conviction that it will compromise the freedom of the Catholic Church. The line from John Ireland and John A. Ryan to Cardinals Cushing and Ritter seems perfectly clear, and the American election of a Roman Catholic to the presidency confirmed the fact that Catholicism is operating here within the accepted limits of our pietistic frame of reference. Even Cardinal Spellman, whose attachment to the conservative wing has dimmed his lustre in recent years, has tolerated in his diocese the existence of Dorothy Day's anarchistic and perfectionist *Catholic Worker,* than which no magazine and no enterprise in America could be more pietistic.

Here again it is necessary to avoid associating pietism simply with progressivism or the welfare state ideals. Stephen Wise and Dorothy Day are clearly in the antinomian camp of American pietism. But we have also seen a strong movement among Catholics to associate with conservative and even rightwing fanatical pietism since the days of Father Coughlin. During the McCarthy era rightwing pietistic politics became very appealing to a large number of Roman Catholics. I would certainly put William F. Buckley and the *National Review* in the same rightwing pietistic camp with the Protestant journal called *Christian Economics,* which numbered Billy Graham among its board members. Ralph Lord Roy in his book, *Apostles of Discord,* noted that it was no longer uncommon to see Roman Catholic priests sitting on the same platforms with Fundamentalist ministers in various rallies designed to make America safe for the cross and the flag against Communism. In this respect there is little to choose between the conservative revivalism of Fulton Sheen and that of Billy Graham. You can compare the sermons of this Catholic bishop and this Southern Baptist evangelist and find them

[15] Archbishop Ireland once characterized Hecker's views in these pietistic terms: "His was the profound conviction that in the present age, at any rate, the order of the day should be individual action—every man doing his fair duty and waiting for no one else to prompt him." Quoted in Clifton E. Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1960), p. 431.

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virtually identical in their pietistic denunciations of atheistic Communism and their blatant equation of Christianity with American patriotism and the free enterprise system. And on the other side of the fence, it is often hard to tell the politically liberal editorials of the Catholic magazine *Commonweal* from those in the Jewish *Commentary* or the Protestant *Christian Century*. What the Protestants, Catholics and Jews all share, whether conservative or liberal, is the acute sense of personal responsibility to make our system work, an urgency to remake the world in conformity with the ethical absolutes we hold in common from the Judeo-Christian tradition, and the sense of guilt at our own good fortune in the midst of a world of underprivilege. Perhaps the most striking feature of America's fourth Great Awakening has been the fact that for the first time Roman Catholics and Jews shared fully in it. "To be a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew," Herberg concludes, "are today the alternative ways of being an American." [16]

Turning to the field of American literature, where I speak only as an amateur, I can merely suggest some of the many ways in which I think it can be described as pietistic. The most obvious, though the least satisfying to us today, is in its relation to "the Genteel Tradition"—the view that all true literature is and must be morally pure and spiritually uplifting. This outlook dominated our literary aesthetic in the nineteenth century and it is epitomized in the pietism of Bryant's "To a Waterfowl," Longfellow's "Excelsior," and Holmes' "The Chambered Nautilus." This moralistic quality also inspired Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales and most of William Dean Howells' "smiling" realism. If this soul-perfecting aesthetic did not produce our best literature, it certainly produced our most popular and most characteristic.

The second and almost equally popular pietistic strain in our literature has been in our novels of righteous indignation, social satire and muckraking reform. Characteristic of the best-selling novels in this vein are *Uncle Tom's Cabin, Looking Backward, In His Steps, The Jungle* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. Among this group of pietists striving by one means or another to goad Americans to reform their corruptions and to get on with perfecting the world, we would also have to include novelists of a somewhat higher rank like John Dos Passos, Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, Sinclair Lewis and Hamlin Garland. Their muckraking was less direct but their criticism and implicit idealism was no less compulsive.

But our best poets and writers belong in the third category of literary pietism. They are the ones who, like the Puritans, are not sure they are

[16] Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (New York, 1955), p. 274.

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among the saved but who want desperately to establish some rapport with the absolute. They are pietists because, as Paul Tillich puts it, they face the ultimate concerns of the human situation. R. P. Blackmur, in an illuminating essay on "Religious Poetry in America," has characterized this group of American writers as belonging to "the great wrestling tradition" of western Christendom—those who, like Jacob wrestling with the Angel, are "wrestling with God, with the self, with the conscience, and above all in our latter day with our behavior." In this tradition belongs the poetry of Edward Taylor, of Emily Dickinson and of Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed." In the post-Christian era of American pietism this tradition includes the poetry of T. S. Eliot, Robert Lowell, Robert Frost and Wallace Stevens. "All of these poets," says Blackmur, "write poetry which can be understood only if it is taken as religious." But

> since there is no seal upon us in this post-Christian time, our religious like our other emotions come out of Pandora's box; . . . as religion takes new forms and changes the nature and scope of its interventions, so the poetry associated with religion supervenes differently upon our reading lives. . . . We are likely to be concerned with the excruciation (as Jacob was not); with Jacob's wrestling with the Angel, Man, or God; with the dark night of the soul which never ends . . . with the great sweep of rival creations since . . . we can accept God but not his Creation.[17]

This same statement applies with equal force to our novelists, most of whom belong in the post-Christian tradition despite Randall Stewart's attempt to fit them into the category of Christian orthodoxy. It is certainly this wrestling tradition which informs Melville's quarrel with God —as Blackmur says, "he sought the God he fought." This is the essence of Hawthorne's probing of the human heart. It inspired Mark Twain's desperate longing for the certainty of St. Joan and his conclusion that between Mary Baker Eddy and "The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg" there was no moral truth left in modern man. It lies at the heart of William Faulkner's message in *The Fable*. The temper of our best literature can be stated in pietistic-perfectionist terms as anguish, frustration, despair, anger, intensity—anguish over the impurity of man in an impure world; anger at the corruptions and corrupters of human conscience; frustration at man's inability to come to terms with himself or the universe. No doubt all great writers are fundamentally concerned with such wrestlings, but I am convinced that this concern has been more

[17] R. P. Blackmur, "Religious Poetry in the United States," in *Religious Perspectives in American Culture*, eds. J. W. Smith and A. Leland (Princeton, 1961), p. 285.

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pervasive and more consistent in American literature than in that of any other culture in modern Christendom or post-Christendom. It is not just *one* theme of our literature, it is *the* theme.

The peculiarly American approach to the wrestling tradition has been described in many ways. R. W. B. Lewis in *The American Adam,* argues that our literature has been permeated by "the Adamic ideal," the search for innocence in the New World's second Garden of Eden. And even men like Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Ellison and Salinger who know, in the twentieth century, that the quest for perfection is bound to fail because it is based upon false premises, nevertheless write on in search of it. The heroes and nonheroes of contemporary American fiction (and drama too), Lewis concludes,

> share in their common aloneness that odd aura of moral priority over the waiting world which was a central ingredient in the Adamic fictional tradition [of the nineteenth century]. Each of them struggles tirelessly, sometimes unwittingly and often absurdly, to realize the full potentialities of the classic figure which each represents: the Emersonian figure, 'the simple genuine self against the whole world.' [18]

Which is really not only the classic Emersonian figure but the classic pietistic figure of the Christian man who is in the world but not of it because he will not, must not, compromise with evil lest he fall again like Adam.

Another approach to the pietistic temper of our literature is offered in A. N. Kaul's *The American Vision.* Kaul points out that the absence of a realistic tradition in mid-nineteenth-century American fiction and the failure of our novelists in this period to be concerned with pragmatic or practical social reform (as say Dickens or Balzac were) was the result of a more basic concern among our novelists to create a perfect or an ideal society:

> The most significant novelists of the first sixty years of the 19th century . . . shared the general feeling that America was the land of social experimentation, and while practical men battled over new political and economic institutions, they sought in their work the moral values necessary for the regeneration of human society. Exploration of existing society led them repeatedly to the theme of ideal community life.

That is, they were concerned not with the mere palliatives of reform but with "a fundamental social ethic." Hence, says Kaul, those books which ostensibly deal with an escape from civilization, like the Leatherstocking Tales, *Huckleberry Finn, Omoo, The Blithedale Romance,* and even

[18] R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam* (Phoenix paperback, 1958), p. 198.

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Henry James' books about Americans in Europe, are not stating a rejection of our society but rather are posing for their readers the ultimate questions about the essential qualities of an ideal society. "Separation from Europe was the great fact of the American experience even as the creation of a regenerate society was its highest ideal," writes Kaul. Therefore the theme which American writers posed for themselves and their readers "can be described as separation from established society and search for ideal community." [19] And by community Kaul means not merely some political Utopia but the kind of communion of free individuals which the pietist finds in a separated church of regenerate believers. It is a moral and not a pragmatic search for Utopia.

A third approach to the pietistic quality of American literature is put forward by Barry Marks in his study of E.E. Cummings as a classic example of the American idealist in revolt against a bourgeois culture. Marks concludes his discussion of Cummings' peculiar and difficult stylistic devices by comparing his style to the difficult styles adopted by so many other American writers—Thoreau, Whitman, Melville, James, Faulkner. Thoreau, Marks says, "had undergone a profound spiritual renewal" in his experience at Walden Pond, and "he was satisfied with nothing less than a book which might induce readers to share the same experience." The most characteristic writers from Thoreau to Cummings write out of what is to them the same kind of "world-shattering" religious experience. And rather than explain it in what would be only feeble expositions, they purposely adopted a difficult, even disorderly and obscure style hoping thereby "to shake readers from the expectation of being *merely* entertained, of *merely* reading a book [about an experience], into a readiness to participate with their whole beings in a deep encounter with life itself." [20]

A similar pietistic interpretation can be made of American art and architecture where a direct personal confrontation of the visual image is designed to uplift the viewer (as in the Hudson River School of painting) or to shock him (as in the Ashcan, abstract, or Pop Art schools) into a new awareness of himself and his world—an awareness which always has moral overtones. I might also point to the moralistic qualities of Jefferson's architectural theory or Horatio Greenough's "functionalism," and suggest that the essentially pietistic quality of American architecture lies in its perennial and deep-seated urge to place man in harmony with the supernatural through establishing his proper relationship to Nature. Our most characteristically American architects from Andrew Jackson Down-

[19] A. N. Kaul, *The American Vision* (New Haven, 1963), pp. 5, 35, 67.
[20] Barry A. Marks, *E. E. Cummings* (New York, 1964), pp. 134, 136.

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ing to Frank Lloyd Wright have agreed with Emerson's view that "Nature is the expositor of the Divine Mind" and that we must, in Horace Bushnell's phrase, go "through Nature to God."

This is essentially what Wright means by "organic Architecture," and by his phrase "Every true aesthetic is an implication of nature." "Reality," he wrote, "is spirit—essence brooding just behind aspects." His pietism, like Emerson's, can be seen in his reliance upon the intuitive communion between the artist and the moral law. It is this, he says, which produces "the harmony of the whole" in any true work of art.[21]

As for the pietistic-perfectionism which abounds in our everyday life, it takes two forms: one, the quest for perfectionism as itself a kind of pious obligation, and the other, a gnawing fear or guilt (sometimes described by sociologists as "the self-hatred of the middle class") that there is more to life than we are making of it, and that we must do better in the future.

However, while Americans think pietistically on moral questions, they are by no means so perfectionist as, say, the Germans or the Japanese are in the realm of craftsmanship, art or dedication to detail. No doubt some of the old Yankee craftsmen had this quality (like those who built the wonderful one hoss shays or the clipper ships) and the Shakers displayed it in their furniture and architecture. But by and large Americans have not been interested in creating perfect or even careful craftsmanship. They are in too much of a hurry to get on to the millennium to work patiently over any details. Craftsmanship is incompatible with shorter work hours and mass production; moreover it smacks of an exploited lower class and a wealthy aristocracy. Our perfectionism in work or in leisure (like our plastic sailboats that never need painting, caulking or scraping) lies in the realm of efficiency and easy functioning rather than in lasting quality, thoroughness or artistry of detail. There is no denying that American haste in construction is characteristically slipshod, makeshift, jerrybuilt. We build only for the short term, not for eternity. Only God can build for eternity and we have too far to go to reach perfection to waste time trying to perfect the imperfectible. Fearing the sin of pride in our own artistry or craftsmanship we righteously pretend to disdain the things you can't take with you.

American perfectionism lies in movement, in action and in the future. We believe a regenerate man is capable of "growing in grace" but pure grace exists only in heaven or in the millennium. We change our styles in clothes, home furnishings and automobiles almost yearly because

[21] Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (London, 1932), pp. 144-54.

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change itself is good—it prevents the hardening of anything into custom, tradition or institutionalism, which are by definition bad. They impede the pursuit of happiness by seeking to retain too much of the imperfect present or past. We sometimes regret the shoddiness of American workmanship and the wastefulness of built-in obsolescence (as Thorstein Veblen did) but on balance our distrust of institutionalism is stronger than our love of thrift. David Potter has pointed out that a "people of plenty" finds it difficult to maintain the Old World's faith in thrift as the Protestant ethic defined it. We see in those who hold up the ideals of perfect craftsmanship and art, reactionaries who would lead us back to the static class and craft system of medieval society—the Ralph Adams Crams, the T. S. Eliots, the Nashville Agrarians.

This is what gives the pietistic-perfectionist tone to American pragmatism despite the unfortunate slip of William James in defining it as "the cash value of ideas." Americans pietistically mistook James to mean that pragmatism was materialistic and concerned only with the expedient or profitable in the mercenary sense. But by using (as Santayana said) the only measure Americans have for values, James meant only to say that the value of pragmatism was in helping us get on with the job of perfecting our society and solving those institutional problems which impeded progress. The key to "the pragmatic revolt" like "the Transcendentalist revolt" was its pietistic anti-formalism, its dislike for a block universe, its openness to new experiments in thought and action. Despite John Dewey's apparent commitment to naturalism and behaviorism, his real motivating force was his desire to break the hold of the past and to reconstruct philosophy so as to facilitate change without, as he insisted, limiting freedom. Dewey's own inherent pietism, set forth in his Book *A Common Faith,* lies in his belief that "shared experience" will lead to a common set of values dedicated to the forward-looking experiment and to ever-widening freedom.[22] When an American says he is pragmatic or empirical he means that he is willing to try anything new which promises to get himself or the world a little further along toward perfect freedom and perfect order.

Because we find it so difficult to reconcile our contradictory ideals, like

[22] Dewey's "common faith" is post-Christian pietism in its rejection of the supernatural absolutes of revealed religion. But in its anti-institutionalism, its claims for "natural piety" and its "Faith in the continued disclosing of truth," it is, as Dewey said, "more religious in quality than is any faith in a completed revelation." "Any activity pursued in behalf of an ideal end against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss because of conviction of its general and enduring value is religious in quality." "It is this *active* relation between ideal and actual to which I would give the name 'God.'" It would be difficult to find a clearer statement of post-Christian pietism. See *A Common Faith* (New Haven, 1934), pp. 25-26, 27, 51.

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thrift and change, pragmatism and absolutism, moral freedom and moral order, we carry on within our own hearts the terrible anguish of the Puritan conscience. We feel perpetually guilty because we do not live up to our own ideals and because our country does not live up to its ideals. Our sense of guilt is apparent in our high consumption of alcohol and our high rate of divorce, ulcers, heart attacks and colitis. I would contend that it is not the fierce pace of the American pursuit of "the Almighty dollar" which produces these results so much as our pietistic conscientiousness which makes us dissatisfied with ourselves. We drive ourselves to drink not for pleasure but to forget our failures. We even feel that our leisure is wasted and our pleasures are superficial though we work terrifically hard at them.

Out of this self-disgust and guilt, of course, comes much of what is most characteristically worthwhile about American life. We are not just flagellating ourselves by reading *Babbitt, The Status Seekers, The Organization Man, The Crack in the Picture Window, The Group*. We are engaging in healthy self-criticism and self-examination. We want to know where we have failed and we take our failures very seriously. We set up all sorts of societies and groups to improve ourselves and our society. We may laugh at the foibles of the P.T.A., the Women's Clubs, the Great Books clubs, the Boy Scouts, Adult Education and the League of Women Voters, but they are the essence of our social system. It is from this self-doubting and guilt-ridden middle class that the more radical pietists of the right and left draw their strength for periodic national reformations. We are too pietistic to like politics—politics requires too many compromises for an "honest" man—but we recognize the compromises we ourselves make in our everyday lives. We consider it our duty to vote and to make our political parties toe the line or to "throw the rascals out" if they are as forgetful of their campaign promises as we are of our New Year's resolutions. We are still perfectionists underneath our veneer of sophistication and still reformers despite our neo-orthodox awareness of original sin.

No final estimate of the value of the pietistic and perfectionist streaks in the American temper is possible until historical judgment can be passed upon the whole American experiment. These elements have produced some of the worst aspects of American self-righteousness, bigotry and naive stupidity. They have also inspired most of America's dynamic generosity, self-awareness and social concern. I do not contend that everything in American life can be traced to, or explained by, these qualities, but I do believe that by and large they have played a major role in shaping our decisions and given a distinctive coloration to our attitudes. For better or for worse America is, and always has been, a nation *engagé*—committed to a moralistic approach to life—a nation of pietists.

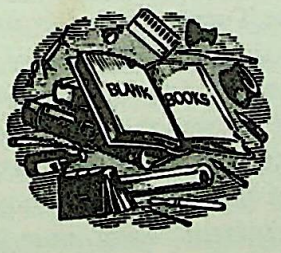
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Afternote

This exploratory essay cries out for amplification, qualification and sophistication. If I were to rewrite it, I would make at least five changes: I would explain more clearly that I do not use the term pietism as a synonym for fanaticism, puritanism or fundamentalism, but in the broadest sense as an approach to life or a way of life; the chief characteristic of this American life-style is its persistent propensity to judge the transient in terms of the transcendent. Second, I would stress more heavily the doctrine of "further light" which has sustained the openness of America's "lively experiment" in freedom and provided the countervailing force to pietism's tendencies toward conformity and uniformity. I would spell out the significantly different tonal qualities of pietism expressed in American Catholicism, Judaism, Protestantism and post-Christian humanism. I would not be so dogmatic about the claim that pietism is *the* theme of all American literature. And I would stress that I am not trying either to praise or to condemn the pietistic quality of our culture but simply to understand it. Being a pietist myself, I will confess here that I think it has been on the whole "a good thing," and I worry that it may be at low ebb in our time — which is what all good pietists feel about their generation.

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Everett S. Lee

The Turner Thesis Re-examined

IN A MEETING AT THE CHICAGO WORLD'S FAIR IN 1893, FREDERICK JACKSON Turner, then a young man of 32, read a paper entitled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," doubtless the most influential paper ever presented before a congress of historians. According to Riegel, "The rapid and almost complete acceptance of Turnerian ideas soon produced a flood of references by historians, sociologists, novelists, playwrights, and in fact by almost anyone sufficiently literate to put pen on paper. The historic Turner essay seemed to rate only slightly lower in the popular estimation than the Bible, the Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence."[1] Franklin Delano Roosevelt drew upon it to justify the ways of the New Deal. Said he: "Equality of opportunity as we have known it no longer exists. . . . Our last frontier has long since been reached, and there is practically no more free land. . . . There is no safety valve in the form of a Western prairie to which those thrown out of work by the Eastern economic machines can go for a new start. . . ."[2]

Part of the appeal of the Turner thesis was its boldness and simplicity. In his own words, "The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development."[3] It was the free lands of the West that constituted a safety valve for discontented Eastern masses and furnished the nationalizing impulses that bound the loose confederation of states into a strong central government. Even more important, it was "to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That

[1] Robert E. Riegel, "American Frontier Theory," *Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale*, III, No. 2 (1956), 367.

[2] *Idem.*

[3] Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" in George Rogers Taylor, ed., *The Turner Thesis Concerning the Role of the Frontier in American History* (Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1949), p. 1.

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coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom—these are traits of the frontier." [4] Regretfully Turner noted at the conclusion of his essay that "The frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history." [5]

Most of us are now several generations removed from our pioneer forebears, if indeed we had any, and most of us have been rendered cautious by the reception accorded more recent monistic explanations of national character. It now seems obvious that the Turner thesis is too simple an explanation for such complexities as American democracy and American character, so after forty years of general and enthusiastic acceptance it is now the fashion to attack Turner's propositions. It can fairly be said that the supporting evidence was meager and that the thesis was not so much proved as reiterated. Nevertheless, there is great intuitive appeal in this theory, and few are willing to abandon it entirely.

In part, the Turner thesis still commands credence because of the admittedly crucial importance of vast areas of free land during the formative period of American democracy, but another reason for its appeal is that Turner, in emphasizing the frontier, was developing a special case of a more general theory of migration. Most of the effects, desirable and undesirable, that were attributed by Turner to the frontier can, with equal or better logic, be attributed to migration, and in addition, the migration theory does not collapse or depend upon tradition for its maintenance after the frontier is gone. It is not meant by this to substitute one monistic explanation of American development for another. The point is that migration has been a force of greatest moment in American civilization, and that from the magnitude and character of migration within this country certain consequences logically follow. And yet these in turn reinforce the tendency to migrate, so that when we try to arrive at cause and effect we are caught in a never ending circle in which the apparent effects viewed in a different way seem to have produced the very phenomena we first accounted as causes. It is therefore not maintained, paraphrasing Turner, that migration explains American civilization. It certainly does not, but that it was and is a major force in the development of American civilization and in the shaping of American character hardly anyone will deny. The magnitude and unique-

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

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ness of internal migration in the United States are, however, not generally realized, and research on migration differentials is only beginning to reveal the concomitants of continual movement from place to place.

In America we can say that migration is a part of our way of life. We are all but a few generations removed from our immigrant ancestors, whether they landed at Plymouth Rock or Ellis Island. Within our country, migration is of such scale as to astound foreign observers. In recent years one in each five persons moved from one house to another in each twelve-month period, one in fourteen migrated from one county to another, and one in thirty from one state to another. These are crude figures for both sexes and all ages. At the age of maximum migration, 20-24, one in six males moved from one county to another, and one in ten shifted state of residence. Over twenty per cent of the native population lives outside the state of birth, but again this figure is a weighted average for all ages and makes the incidence of interstate migration seem smaller than it is, since at ages fifty and thereafter nearly two out of five native Americans have set up residence outside the state of birth. Migration of this order has been the rule rather than the exception in American history, and calculations made independently by Henry S. Shyrock and myself indicate that the present high level of interstate migration has existed since at least 1850.

Moreover the figures cited are underestimates. They all relate to net migrants, those persons who moved during a given period and who had not died nor returned to the county or state of birth. It is well known that net internal migration is generally but a small residue left from the interplay of much larger streams of in- and out-migration. Who has not known the migrant who returned from afar to his place of origin, or the person who is constantly moving from one place to another? Those of us who are not migrants have many contacts with such persons, some from distant states. There is probably no community of any size which is so isolated that it has not felt the impact of migration, either from the loss of its members, or from the entrance of persons from other communities, or almost invariably, from both. We are indeed a nation of migrants and we always have been.

Had our ancestors not been willing migrants and were we as a people not willing to pull up stakes to strike out for greener pastures, American economic development would have been seriously retarded and could not operate with its present efficiency. Modern capitalism demands the quick exploitation of new resources and the abandonment of those which no longer pay well. Here new resources, wherever located, can draw upon a large and almost instantaneous labor supply, and workers do

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not wait for local resources to be exhausted before moving elsewhere in desperation. The mushrooming mining towns of the West in the 1850's and 1860's have their modern counterparts in the newly established cities that center around defense industries. The exodus of farmers from the rocky slopes of New England into western New York and Ohio has been exceeded in magnitude by the desertion of the dust bowl for California and the Northwest. Contrast this situation with that which is found in some other countries where a labor surplus may exist in a community ten miles from one in which there is a labor shortage, and yet the government finds it hard to persuade unemployed workers to make the short move toward ready employment.

In this connection, it should be pointed out that the true safety valve was not the frontier, even before its alleged disappearance about 1890: it was migration, sometimes to the frontier it is true, sometimes to better farming lands far behind the frontier, but more often it was from the farm to the city. Migration to the city has almost always exceeded the movement to the frontier, and in recent years the migration to Turner's West, however defined, has been to the city rather than to open country. The city has more often been an outlet for the underemployed of rural areas than the farm a haven for the unemployed workers in Eastern industries.

We now know that migrants are not a cross section of the general population. Internal migration as well as external migration is selective, especially for young adults in the ages of greatest productivity and also of greatest reproductivity. The characteristics of migrants between states are somewhat similar to those of migrants from abroad in the days of peak immigration. Males predominate and they are concentrated at ages 20 to 30. Migrants are better educated than nonmigrants, and the highest migration rates are for those at the top of the occupational ladder. The fragmentary studies that exist even suggest that migrants are more intelligent than nonmigrants.

In addition to being young, migrants are likely to be single or in the early stages of family formation. As size of family increases, even when age of head is held constant, there is a decrease in migration. With migration recognized as a part of the way of life, an extra premium is placed upon family limitation and it may be suggested that students who are puzzled by the early fall in the birth rate in the United States, prior even to that in France, consider migration as a predisposing factor. More important, perhaps, than the stimulus to family limitation is the breakdown of the *grossfamilie* system with its encompassed generations and its extension of the privileges and obligations of kinship to cousins of remote

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degree. By migrating from his clan the individual removes himself from its control and from its protection. Were it not that a highly developed sense of individualism prompted his move in the first place, it would be necessary to acquire it. He and his family become a self-supporting and, to some degree, a self-sufficient little unit. Since he must fight his own battles and provide his own subsistence without the support of his clan he becomes impatient with the demands of distant relatives upon him.

In some persons individualism may manifest itself, as in Turner's frontiersman, in truculence and uncouthness, but most migrants find that a premium is placed upon the ability to adjust to new situations and new people. They learn the value of outward conformity and may come to place great value upon it. They make acquaintances easily—in short, they exhibit many of the characteristics of today's "organization man," and I wonder if the attributes of this gentleman are not largely those in which generations of Americans have been schooled. Incidentally, the "organization man" is likely to be exceptionally migratory because of the practice of large companies of regularly transferring officials from plant to plant or from branch to branch.

A highly mobile population is not one in which an hereditary elite is likely to develop. Migration diminishes the value of blood ties and the possession of a distinguished name may come to mean little. In Massachusetts and South Carolina Adams and Pinckney may be names to conjure with, but what do they mean in Brooklyn and Whisky Gulch? A different set of values distinguishes the mobile from the static society. Land ownership, for example, as a mark of status gives way to more transportable items, among which ability and money are prominent.

It is hardly necessary to note that in the long run nationalism is promoted by interstate migration. Turner, himself, remarked that "Nothing works for nationalism like intercourse within the nation" and that "mobility of population is death to localism." [6] The migrant from Alabama to Detroit is likely to waver in his devotion to state's rights, and the northern metropolis which acquires the product of a South Carolina public school for Negroes is led to wonder whether that state can be entrusted with so important a function as education. Not only does migration promote nationalism and lessen the attachment to a state or locality but it also serves to encourage the extension of the functions of national government into areas once reserved for the states.

With our set of values most of the things we have associated with migration seem desirable. Individualism and equalitarianism are usually associated with democracy, and the creation of a strong central govern-

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

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ment seems necessary for survival. But tendencies toward conformity and the extension of federal functions may be disturbing. Let us now consider some of the less desirable aspects of migration.

In studying one of our most migratory groups, young executives, researchers noted that though superficial friendships are made readily, there was reluctance to form deep attachments with emotional ties and mutual obligations, partly because they would be interrupted by migration. It would seem that an almost inevitable result of migration with its severing of friendships is the focusing of emotional relationships inward to the immediate family with perhaps too much expected of each member.

Such tensions, if they exist, are minor in comparison with those which result from unsuccessful efforts to adjust or conform, or from rebellion. It is now evident that rates of admission to mental hospitals are much higher for migrants than of nonmigrants and, while this may be true in part because of selection for disease-prone individuals as migrants, the struggle with the changing environment must also play a part.[7] Often the migrant does not understand the reasons for doing things in a particular way in a new community. For example, the detailed sanitary regulations of the northern city may be looked upon as restrictions of freedom by a migrant from the rural South. With rapidly shifting populations, custom cannot be depended upon for controls which are automatically effective in static societies and, since education is too slow and too costly, laws are proliferated.

Migration often breeds carelessness as to immediate surroundings. Few people hope to remain in the slums and not many young people expect to. If surroundings become too bad the quickest and easiest remedy is migration. Local reform movements are hampered and cities remain "corrupt and contented" partly because the natural leaders move to the suburbs. Newcomers are not always aware of the true nature of civic problems and may be tempted by the immediate favors of the political boss to vote against long-range improvements. And, when the newcomer realizes what the situation is, it is much easier to migrate than to attempt reform.

Migrants are likely to meet their numerous new situations with temporary expedients at the expense of long-run solutions. The most characteristic of American philosophies, pragmatism, which stresses continous short-term adjustments in the conviction that whatever works is best, is a typically migrant philosophy. If, in the long run, we are not dead, we may at least be somewhere else. This carries over into a general em-

[7] See Benjamin Malzberg and Everett S. Lee, *Migration and Mental Disease* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1956).

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phasis on immediate practicality at the cost of interest in philosophical questions. Perhaps our national bias against basic science or "nonpaying" research is partly due to the spatial restlessness of the American people.

Also, the American penchant for change for change's sake may be associated with our geographic mobility. Migration has been phenomenally successful for Americans. The immigrants from abroad did find superior economic opportunities, and if they were fleeing oppression they found freedom. Within our country the major flows of migration have been from areas of lower to higher economic returns, or from areas in which the amenities were less well developed to those in which they were better developed. The natural interpretation by the migrant is that migration has been a good thing; having done it once he is willing to do it again if another area looks more attractive. This attitude he imparts to his children and to nonmigrants with whom he comes in contact. In itself, migration is one of the most drastic social changes; if this is so generally successful, why not other types of change?

In conclusion, it is again stated that no attempt is made to explain American democracy or American character. It is maintained, however, that from a psychological and sociological, as well as from an economic, point of view, migration is one of the most important factors in American civilization. There are few characteristics which are shared by so many Americans as migrant status and spatial movement has correlates which are both good and bad. They have not, however, been thoroughly studied. Sixty years ago Turner's thesis set off a round of the most productive studies in American history. A case can be made that his frontier theory is a special case of an as yet undeveloped migration theory. The tools and the data are now available for extensive research on the effects of migration, and it is hoped that historians and sociologists will now begin to study migration in the larger context of its effect upon the development of the American people.

Afternote

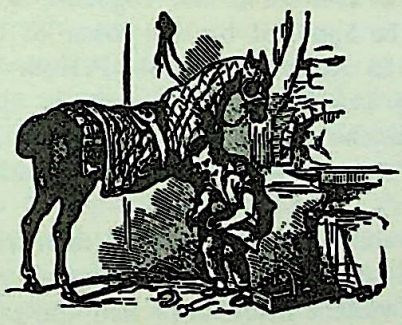
This article originated in a seminar given by Thomas C. Cochran, Frank Thistlethwaite, Murray Murphey, and myself for a total enrollment of two students. We undoubtedly achieved the lowest student-faculty ratio yet experienced by the Department of American Studies in the University of Pennsylvania. I do not know now the exact way in which the idea of this article originated, but much of its development is due to Cochran, Thistlethwaite, and Murphey and our two students. I later gave this paper at the 1957 Meeting of the American Sociological Association in Washington where I was followed

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on the program by George Pierson of Yale University. After he heard my paper, he announced that I had given his paper and, indeed, our ideas on the Turner thesis independently arrived at were extraordinarily similar. My interest in migration as a factor in American civilization has continued and resulted in a paper on "A Theory of Migration" which appeared in *Demography*, III (1966), 47–57. This paper was originally presented at a meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association in the spring of 1965. On this program I was again followed by Professor Pierson, who again stated that I had just anticipated something of what he had to say.

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David Brion Davis

Some Ideological Functions of Prejudice in Ante-Bellum America*

HISTORIANS ARE GENERALLY TOLERANT AND LIBERAL-MINDED PEOPLE. THEY naturally deplore outbreaks of hostility toward minority groups. And it is not my purpose to suggest that groups founded on hatred and prejudice were morally better than they have usually been pictured. No one who has read accounts of the burning of Catholic churches and convents, of the massacre of Mormon women and children, of the persecutions of Negroes and abolitionists, of the cries for blood vengeance against Southern slaveholders, can fail to be appalled by the power of blind prejudice and explosive aggression in America's Middle Period. In spite of rhetoric deifying a rationally balanced Constitution, in spite of a façade of ordered symmetry in the houses and public buildings of the Greek Revival, ante-bellum America was not ruled by a mild and tolerant spirit of reason.

We should not be content, however, with mere righteous indignation or with the dismissal of hate groups as symptoms of social disease. Nor can we assume that violent intolerance had the same meaning in the period from 1825 to 1860 that it has today. There are two general approaches available to a historian interested in movements against such groups as Masons, Catholics and Mormons. The first would be to examine the immediate sources of group conflict, such as ethnic rivalry, economic competition and institutional disharmony. This approach would bring out important differences in the various movements and would doubtless suggest that as long as people are animated by strong hopes and allegiances, they will attack any group that seems to endanger their security or to disrupt their expectations. In the unpredictable and socially fluid environment of the Burned-over District, for example, the influence and solidarity of Freemasons must have seemed a genuine threat to equality

* The substance of this paper was read at the 1962 meeting of the American Historical Association.

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of opportunity. In Illinois, Joseph Smith's attempt to establish a political Kingdom of God, his creation of a Mormon Legion and a secret, oligarchic Council of Fifty, naturally aroused hostility. The sudden influx of hundreds of thousands of Catholic immigrants presented a mounting challenge to the religious and political power structure of the Northeast. When we look closely at such historical situations, and at what the average man perceived and believed, we can find sufficient cause for fear and conflict.

But even the most careful analysis of concrete social and economic situations would not account for four distinctive characteristics of these movements of counter-subversion. Firstly, their literature reflected an anxiety that was greatly disproportionate to any actual conflict of interest. Secondly, there was a cultural continuity between such movements and the traditional European response to radical religious sects and secular brotherhoods; anti-Catholicism, of course, was as old as the Reformation, and its principal arguments and accusations changed very little over the centuries. Thirdly, Protestant ministers played a key role in these crusades against alleged subversion, which were related by ideology and joint membership to a number of reform movements, including those for temperance, improved education and protection of the Sabbath. Fourthly, images of the subversive group, while often borrowed from the ruling classes of Europe, were adapted to fit the fears and half-conscious yearnings of the American people. I have attempted elsewhere to show that the movements against Masons, Mormons and Catholics shared a common stereotype of the Great American Enemy, whose traits formed an inverted image of the ideals of popular democracy and the cult of the common man.[1] It would appear that the movements of counter-subversion of the Middle Period were a social phenomenon quite different from the more familiar pattern of prejudice as a mask for privilege, as an instrument for the exploitation of a powerless and downtrodden people.

We can perhaps gain a better understanding of the seeming paradox of prejudice accompanying a desire for greater liberty and equality if we place these movements within the larger context of American ideology and culture. If we ask what values were thought to be threatened by supposedly subversive groups, and what parts of American society were thought to be vulnerable and insecure, we may find that prejudice provided a basis for defining and working out certain fundamental problems. This would not imply that prejudice was a good thing or that it contributed to the mental health of the nation, any more than neurotic or psy-

[1] "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: an Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLVII (September 1960), 205-24.

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chotic symptoms contribute to the mental health of an individual. But as is well known, an understanding of the particular functions of a neurotic symptom may lead to a better knowledge of the tensions with which an individual struggles.

The literature of these movements reveals a preoccupation with the problem of intellectual and moral diversity in a free society; with the role of organization in an individualistic society; and with the relation of tradition and change to America's destiny. Each problem, as we shall see, involves a dualism in thought that has often produced tension and anxiety. It seems probable, though here we must rely on inference, that such tension and anxiety were at least temporarily resolved by definition of a subversive group and by a call for action limiting its power. I do not mean to imply that this explains the motives of nativists—and for convenience I shall use that term for all Americans who thought of themselves as defending native traditions against essentially alien forces. I suggest only that certain ideological tensions magnified and gave added meaning to concrete conflicts with minority groups.

Let us look first at the question of intellectual and moral diversity in a free society. It was a cardinal tenet of Protestantism that if men were free to read the Bible on their own, with minimum guidance from clerical authority, they would have no excuse for not recognizing the Revealed Word and accepting their obligations to God and their fellow men. It was also a traditional tenet of secular liberalism that if men were free to read, think and speak as they chose, truth would ultimately prevail over error and superstition. A diversity of opinion, far from being cause for alarm, was a guarantee that eternal truths would not be shut off from view by the false authority of custom or transient prejudice. Yet the liberal ideology, as descended from Locke, also acknowledged the supreme importance of environment in training the habits and shaping the ideas of men. If all ideas derived from sensory experience, it was theoretically possible for a social engineer to construct an environment that would mold a particular type of man. The threat and promise of such behavioristic conditioning were recognized in the eighteenth century, and later fascinated nativist writers, who sometimes associated the psychology of sensation with the mysterious powers of mesmerism and phrenology.

The usual way of reconciling environmentalism with a faith in intellectual freedom and diversity was to assume that truth, when conveyed by the written and spoken word, and especially when aided by the Holy Spirit or the innate moral sense, would overcome the effects of the most repressive environment. The funereal images of the revivalist preacher, the polished rhetoric of the political orator, the eloquent appeals of missionaries and reformers, the sentimental scenes of the temperance

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tracts, would play upon the senses and emotions of the most indifferent public. Perhaps no people ever displayed such faith in the power of sheer communication as did the Americans of the Middle Period. So long as a man was confident that the truth of his own doctrines could not fail of acceptance, as soon as they won sufficient circulation, he would not fear diversity of opinion or even the freedom of others to propagate patent falsehoods.

But despite official faith in the compatibility of truth and freedom, Americans frequently expressed misgivings over the proliferation of sects and faddist groups, the spectacular success of prophets, demagogues, revivalists and hoaxers.[2] In a land without intellectual or moral authorities, the only arbiter was public opinion, which was slow and gullible at first, but which might be brought to ridicule the charlatan or to laugh at its own credulity. Yet this self-corrective principle could operate only where all citizens accepted the ultimate authority of public opinion, acknowledging its right to penetrate every sanctum of privacy.

Henry Dana Ward, a prominent anti-Mason, emphasized the virtue of benevolent associations and other corporate bodies, so long as their activities were open to publicity.[3] But as Joseph Smith himself wrote, in the *Book of Mormon,* "the Lord worketh not in secret combinations."[4] Secrecy, according to Georg Simmel, is one of man's greatest inventions, for it raises the possibility of a hidden world alongside the manifest world.[5] We might add that this possibility, like that of an ideal world or utopia, may give form and direction to manifest reality. Yet a secret creates tension because it can always be betrayed, its effects may disrupt normal expectations, and it always stands in the position of an exception to the general or universal rule—particularly to the will of the majority.

What if a group was insulated from the cleansing currents of public opinion? What if cunning leaders developed a system of deluding and conditioning people, a system so effective that its victims were no longer accessible to conversion to the truth? What if the Bible, the single fixed anchorage in the shifting flow of opinions, was perverted to fit the designs of Freemasons and Mormons, or withheld from the laity by Catholic priests? The relative autonomy of such groups was a barrier to the probing and dissolving power of public opinion, and thus a challenge to the whole process by which truth was to be sifted and preserved in the midst of limitless diversity. Such a challenge aggravated tensions and awakened

[2] See esp. David Meredith Reese, *Humbugs of New York: Being a Remonstrance against Popular Delusion . . .* (New York, 1838).

[3] *Anti-Masonic Review and Magazine* (New York), I (December 1828), 3-4.

[4] Ether 8: 19.

[5] *The Sociology of Georg Simmel,* ed. and trans. Kurt Wolff (Glencoe, Ill., 1950), pp. 330-33.

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anxieties that were an integral part of American culture. The nativists' fascination with secret conspiracy, which was often seen as the hidden force responsible for sectional conflict and for otherwise baffling fluctuations in the government and economy, reflected a deep concern over both the ignorance of the common citizen and the lack of rational direction in public affairs.[6]

If Americans generally accepted the liberal doctrine that truth could be secured only by free communication and publicity, they also accepted the romantic belief that morality could be secured only by the sanctification of woman. As early as 1797 John Robison, a Scottish professor of natural philosophy, defined the themes that were to dominate the American literature of counter-subversion for the next century. Expressing horror over the sexual depravity of the ancients, he attributed the moral progress of Europe to the elevation of woman and to the increasing influence of her moral sentiment. The greatest threat to Christian civilization lay in the degrading and desexing of woman, a tactic common to both the Catholic Church and the atheistic Illuminati. In his fantasies of subversion Robison came close to anticipating the later image of licentious, polygamous Mormons.[7] Nativists agreed with him that any deviation from the romantic ideal of marriage and respect for woman's sensibility, modesty and sanctity, which were seen as balancing forces to the hard necessities of the business world, undermined the very foundations of society. Thus the Masons were repeatedly condemned for being cut off from the ennobling influence of women; it was said that their rites were devised "to harden the heart, stupify the conscience, and to eradicate every degree of moral sensibility."[8] The same accusations were made

[6] Richard Rush, letter of May 4, 1831, printed in *The Anti-Masonic Almanac, for the Year 1832*, ed. Edward Giddins (Utica, N.Y., 1831), pp. 29-30; Lebbeus Armstrong, *Masonry Proved to Be a Work of Darkness, Repugnant to the Christian Religion; and Inimical to a Republican Government* (New York, 1830), pp. 4-16; *Anti-Masonic Review*, I, 6-9; Edward Beecher, *The Papal Conspiracy Exposed, and Protestantism Defended, in the Light of Reason, History, and Scripture* (Boston, 1855), pp. 24-29, 31, 133, 388; William Hogan, *Popery! As It Was and as It Is: Also, Auricular Confession: and Popish Nunneries* (Hartford, 1855), pp. 9-11, 29, 73-76, 503-4, 571-77; *Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers*, eds. William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen (New York, 1958), pp. 60-61, 71, 76-79, 101, 293-95, 350; John H. Beadle, *Life in Utah: or, the Mysteries and Crimes of Mormonism* (Philadelphia, [1872]), pp. 30-34, 299-300; Maria Ward, *Female Life among the Mormons: A Narrative of Many Years' Personal Experience, By the Wife of a Mormon Elder, Recently Returned from Utah* (New York, 1857), pp. 94-95.

[7] John Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies*, 3rd ed. (London, 1798), pp. 243-65.

[8] *Free Masonry: A Poem, In Three Cantos, Accompanied with Notes, Illustrative of the History, Policy, Principles, &c. of the Masonic Institution; Shewing the Coincidence of Its Spirit and Design with Ancient Jesuitism . . . By a Citizen of Massachusetts* (Leicester, Mass., 1830), p. 203.

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concerning Catholics and Mormons.[9] The pretensions to divine knowledge of all three groups supposedly led directly to a forgetfulness of human fallibility, to a worship of sheer expediency and ultimately to a life devoid of moral principles and the fear of God. Because of their contempt for and corruption of women, there was no moral force to check this progressive decline.

By associating various dangers, such as secrecy, popular gullibility and the corrupting power of environment and ideology, with the American enemy, the nativist was apparently able to preserve his faith in the triumph of truth and morality in a free society. But his continuing concern with these dangers evinced an underlying tension over the meaning of intellectual and moral diversity in a land without ultimate authorities.

This brings us to the second problem, which concerns the role of organization in an individualistic society. According to Tocqueville, individuals and minorities in America could not appeal to authoritative opinion, independent of the majority, precisely because the country was free from hierarchies of rank, vested privilege and the corporate structure of Europe. Thus America's lack of social orders and fixed distinctions tended to force a conformity to the tastes and standards of the majority. In so fluid and amorphous a society, such groups as Masons, Mormons and Catholics acquired a special significance as self-contained organizations, relatively independent of the shifting currents of majority will. This alone would have made them suspect. But Tocqueville also found that one of the chief forces counteracting the tyranny of the majority was the American proclivity to found voluntary associations, for civic, political and philanthropic purposes, whose functions were similar to those of powerful individuals or families in Europe. The salient traits of such groups were the legislative character of their deliberations, their attempt to mobilize a strong and vocal minority and their ultimate goal of winning over the majority. The same characteristics can be seen in organizations based on a common fear or prejudice. Like most other voluntary organizations, they presented a dual aspect: they promoted their own special interests, attempting to increase their opportunities for economic and political power; they also strove to reorient the majority will in the name of preserving or restoring cherished values.

[9] *Among the Mormons,* eds. Mudler and Mortensen, pp. 327-28, 405-11; Beecher, *Papal Conspiracy,* p. 148; Hogan, *Popery,* pp. 229, 290-91, and *passim; The Cloven Foot: or Popery Aiming at Political Supremacy in the United States, By the Rector of Oldenwold* (New York, 1855), pp. 294-304; Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* (New York, 1954), pp. 2-5, 16-27, 311; Beadle, *Life in Utah,* pp. 304, 332-74; *The Women of Mormonism: or, the Story of Polygamy as Told by the Victims Themselves,* ed. Jennie Anderson Froiseth (Detroit, 1881-82), pp. 113-14, 191; *Fifteen Years among the Mormons: Being the Narrative of Mrs. Mary Ettie V. Smith,* ed. Nelson W. Green (New York, 1857), pp. 44-51.

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In Europe it was class consciousness and fear of the conspiracy of an opposing class that increasingly provided a sense of identity and group solidarity. In America, identity and group solidarity were commonly achieved by associating oneself with the people and with the tradition of the Founding Fathers. But the American could well ask "who are we?" and "who is against us?"—for there was no certainty that his own interests would always be supported by the majority will. This uncertainty raised fundamental questions regarding loyalty. As David Potter has recently shown, loyalties in the period from 1820 to 1860 formed a pattern far more intricate than a simple division of nationalism and sectionalism.[10] Throughout the country there were multitudes of shifting groups and interests whose main ideological bond was a common allegiance to the principles of the Revolution; by the 1820s, as the Revolutionary generation passed away, this bond of a common cause against foreign tyranny changed from living memory to ceremonial tradition. In both North and South, Americans tried to co-ordinate their loyalties to special interests with loyalty to the nation and Constitution. Increasingly, however, this co-ordinating process was carried on by contrasting one's own unconditional loyalty to the nation with the essentially subversive character of some reference group. Adopting a categorical approach to the problem of loyalty and special interest, nativists could assume that American democracy sustained their own values and interests, and deny the possibility of national loyalty being compatible with the special allegiances of Masons, Mormons or Catholics. But while they tried to define their own loyalty in negative terms, as a lack of attachment to a coherent minority, nativists were as much troubled by the absence of solidarity in the majority as by the disciplined effectiveness of autonomous groups. They played repeatedly upon the theme of a flaccid and ignorant public, criminally indifferent to the progress of enemies in acquiring power in political decision and disposal of resources.[11] They simulated repeated crises—the moral equivalents of war—in an attempt to simplify issues and dissolve religious and factional alignments by uniting all patriots against a force imperiling religion and democracy. It would thus appear that movements of counter-subversion were symptomatic of a profound need for community and consensus, and for personal dedication in a higher cause. We may suspect that local economic and social conflicts exacerbated fundamental tensions over the role of organization in a laissez-faire society, or rather, in a society that accepted an ideology of laissez faire.

[10] "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," *The American Historical Review*, LXVII (July 1962), 924-50.

[11] See esp., Hogan, *Popery*, pp. 7-8; *Auricular Confession*, pp. 264-65; *Women of Mormonism*, ed. Froiseth, pp. 285-87, 291-92.

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Morton Grodzins has pointed out that a democracy is built on an integration of nonnational loyalties, whereas a totalitarian state tries to absorb and eliminate all subloyalties.[12] We may ask, therefore, whether the movements of counter-subversion pointed in the direction of totalitarianism? The suspicion becomes stronger at a later period, in the writings of Josiah Strong, for example, where the tradition of anti-Catholicism and anti-Mormonism was combined with a near deification of the power of the state.[13] And after the Civil War, Congress passed a series of discriminatory laws that deprived the Utah Mormons of their basic civil liberties. But in the ante-bellum period, with its multitude of local and sectional loyalties, it was not at all clear which minorities could achieve harmony with the national interest. Nativists represented religious and economic factions that could not possibly win a majority sufficiently strong to enforce their more radical aims. This was especially true when anti-Masons associated the Masonic conspiracy with the power of the Albany Regency over state banks and the Erie Canal; when Whig politicians sought to link Catholicism with the growth of the Democratic Party in eastern cities; and when Gentiles in Utah used anti-Mormonism as a means for protecting their interests in mines and land. A proliferation of rival interests, combined with a loose attachment to places and institutions, meant that no loyalty could be taken for granted. Nativists often lost public favor when they were accused of masking selfish intentions behind a facade of specious patriotism. And their brief triumphs in political life were notably unsuccessful in producing legislation in accord with their principles.

Furthermore, the challenge to Masons, Mormons and Catholics brought an immediate reaction, and forced each group to define its own role in American society. Freemasons pointed to the great patriots who had been members of their order. Various Catholic leaders endeavored to prove the compatibility of Catholic doctrine and American ideals. Brigham Young was led to draw a distinction between loyalty to the Constitution and to "the damned rascals who administer the government"; and even in the 1880s and 90s when the beleaguered Utah Mormons were challenged at home by a Gentile Liberal Party, they responded by forming a People's Party.[14] Significantly, all three groups turned to public opinion as a source of moral authority. It is therefore possible that nativists contributed, in the long run, to an integration of loyalties; to a conviction, that is, that by being a loyal Mason, Mormon

[12] *The Loyal and the Disloyal; Social Boundaries of Patriotism and Treason* (Chicago, 1956); see also, Edward A. Shils, *The Torment of Secrecy; the Background and Consequences of American Security Policies* (Glencoe, Ill., 1956).

[13] *Our Country; its Possible Future and its Present Crisis* (New York, 1886).

[14] Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?*, pp. 344-46.

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or Catholic, one was also being a loyal American. The great exception, of course, was the slavery controversy, which slowly generated a polarization of loyalties that led to outright secession.

The third and final problem is the relation of tradition and change to America's destiny. From its beginning as a nation, the United States had been remarkably hospitable to change and diversity. This permissive tradition was related, on the ideological level, to the ideal of America as a land of promise whose very meaning lay in change and the process of becoming. But as recent studies have shown, there was an underlying tension between the American's image of himself as an adventurous risk-taker, an expansive pioneer, confident of his ability to improve himself and the world; and a contrary image of the American as the Happy Husbandman, a wise innocent in a terrestrial paradise, who is content to enjoy the serene blessings of a simple rural life, and is unencumbered by the fears and superstitions of a moldering civilization.[15] This contradiction was embodied in the liberal ideology inherited from the eighteenth century, when desires to overcome immediate restraints were transformed into an abstract ideal of restoring a supposedly original and pre-social freedom. The pattern persisted as frustrations from concrete rivalries and competition were projected into a hostility to institutions and associations, the products of mere history, which seemed to block the emergence of the unconditioned, self-contained individual. Thus Americans tended to promote change and at the same time to exaggerate the evils and virtues of particular changes. If they professed to see Satan fast at work in the New World Garden, it was because he was a force for change of which they were a part.[16]

America's destiny, then, was associated with a progressive liberation of the individual from all restricting conditions and antecedents; Europe was thought to be sinking under the cumulative weight of evil institutions. But which interests and institutions were of permanent value in furthering America's mission, and which were harmful vestiges from the past? In a famous sermon Theodore Parker attempted to distinguish the permanent essence of Christianity from its transient, historical

[15] Charles L. Sanford, *The Quest for Paradise: Europe and the American Moral Imagination* (Urbana, Ill., 1961); R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the 19th Century* (Chicago, 1955); Roland Van Zandt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of American History* (The Hague, 1959); Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief* (Stanford, 1957); Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: the American West and Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, 1950).

[16] Historians who tend to categorize the Middle Period as one of unrestrained optimism fail to see that such traits as optimism and pessimism have usually been linked together, and that the historical or social situation which gives rise to an expression of extreme optimism may also produce despair and anxiety. This is apparent, for example, in the history of millennialism.

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forms.[17] A similar approach was often taken in defining the meaning of America, which was usually seen as an essentially negative freedom. The agencies and institutions of crucial importance were those that offered the individual a chance for self-expression or fulfillment: the jury, the ballot, the free press, the public school and the western frontier. All of these were thought to be threatened by subversive groups bent on capturing control of America, enslaving its citizens, crushing republicanism and preventing the realization of America's millennial glory.[18] Such groups as Masons, Mormons and Catholics could be taken as symbols of the subordination of the individual to authority. They could also stand for all corporate bodies whose purpose would not end at a given moment in time or with the accomplishment of some limited objective. The enemy's mission, like that of America itself, was universal in scope. As we have already noted, most voluntary associations at once strove to push the aims of special groups, and yet thought of themselves as preserving the idyll of an individualistic, laissez-faire society. Americans ordinarily united on the assumption that once they had achieved some pragmatic objective, they would relinquish their special status as reformers or agitators. By definition, the nativist movements were temporary unities. They would dissolve once they had exposed the secrets of the enemy to public scrutiny, and had mobilized the political power of the majority to liberate individuals trapped in the meshes of an un-American group. In the meantime, however, they provided a sense of identity, a sense of belonging.

Since this essay has been of a frankly speculative character, it may not be out of place to suggest in conclusion an even more tentative hypothesis. There are certain striking parallels between the mentality of the nativist and that of the radical sectarian of medieval and early modern Europe.[19] But the radical sectarian, while professing faith in liberty of conscience, in the moral autonomy of the individual and in the inevitability of the millennium, after a period of struggle with the powers of darkness, always stood in the position of a heretic condemned and persecuted by the established order. In America the sectarian ideals,

[17] *A Discourse on the Transient and Permanent in Christianity* (Boston, 1841).

[18] *Free Masonary: A Poem*, pp. 29-58; *Anti-Masonic Review*, I (September 1829), 293-315; *The Anti-Masonic Almanack, for the Year 1828*, ed. Edward Giddins (Rochester, N.Y., 1827), entry for November and December; Beecher, *Papal Conspiracy*, pp. 14-17, 377-89; Hogan, *Popery*, pp. 123-25; *Auricular Confession*, pp. 264-65; *Among the Mormons*, eds. Mulder and Mortensen, pp. 76-79, 101, 407; Austin N. Ward, *Male Life among the Mormons; or, the Husband in Utah* (Philadelphia, 1863), pp. 224-25, 247-48; Maria Ward, *Female Life*, pp. 378-89; Beadle, *Life in Utah*, pp. 5-9, 78-79, 178, 307, 400-1; *Women of Mormonism*, ed. Froiseth, pp. 285-87, 367-68.

[19] See esp., Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London, 1957) and Rufus M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (New York, 1914).

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which had been appropriated and secularized by the Enlightenment, were at least to some degree a part of the established ideology; the defenders of those ideals were therefore in the position of defending an establishment. By their very nature, however, the sectarian ideals were diffuse and anarchic, especially if pushed to their extremes. They could lead to a repudiation of all laws, mores and social norms which limited the self-affirmation of the individual. Traditionally, they had acquired social meaning and had served as forces for unity and cohesion when pitted against the opposing power of a vast institution or corporate body. The nativist movements may thus have been somewhat regressive ways of coping with fundamental tensions and contradictions in American culture, which were the result, to speak metaphorically, of a disharmony between certain infantile ideals of liberation from all restraining authority, and the necessity of developing the social meanings of freedom in a modern age. If there is any truth to this hypothesis, the movements of counter-subversion provide insight into a transitional stage in the development of the American character.

Afternote

Richard Hofstadter has recently extended some of the themes of this essay to the whole spectrum of American political life. See especially Part I of his *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965).

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A Problem: The Use of the Past



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Warren I. Susman

History and the American Intellectual: Uses of a Usable Past

WRITING DURING WHAT MUST NOW APPEAR TO MANY AS HALCYON DAYS OF faith in the possibilities of social studies, Charles and Mary Beard could declare that "The history of a civilization, if intelligently conceived, may be an instrument of civilization." [1] Buried within what was clearly for the Beards a significant normative proposition—the call for a special kind of history—there rests a fundamental truth even more important for the student of a civilization. The idea of history itself, special kinds of historical studies and various attitudes toward history always play—whether intelligently conceived or not—a major role within a culture. That strange collection of assumptions, attitudes and ideas we have come to call a "world view" always contains a more or less specific view of the nature of history. Attitudes toward the past frequently become facts of profound consequence for the culture itself. Many students of historiography, of course, have expended much worthwhile energy in attempting to unearth the cultural causes of various approaches to the study of the past. This paper, however, suggests, with a series of broad hypotheses, the possibilities involved in a full-scale examination of the cultural consequences of special attitudes toward the past and the uses of history within a culture. In order to do so, I first would like to suggest in the most general sense how two kinds of treatments of the past, designated "mythic" and "historical" for purposes of the discussion, are related to each other and to culture. The rest of the essay proposes a basic outline of the history of some of these key relationships throughout American history.[2]

The idea of "history" itself belongs to a special kind of social and cultural organization. In status or community societies there is no written

[1] This is the first sentence of their introduction to *The Rise of American Civilization* (New York, 1927), p. vii.

[2] An earlier version of this paper was read to a joint American Studies Association—American Historical Association luncheon held in New York, December 28, 1960.

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"history" (although there may be epics or chronicles).[3] Myth predominates in the prevailing world view: a special class—most generally a priesthood—exists in whose hands the monopoly of the interpretation of the myths of the society resides. Few question the nature or kind of social order. The institutional and normative pattern remains relatively static. The myths are sufficient to unify the whole, to answer the largely emotional needs of the members of the community and to provide, when necessary, the collective dreams of the society about the past, the present and the future in the same instant. The myths "explain" all. The function of myth is largely utopian: it provides a vision of the future without providing in and of itself any essential dynamic element which might produce the means for bringing about any changes in the present order of things. Ritual is generally enough to assure the fulfillment of the promise of the myth.

History, however, comes into existence in contract or associational societies. Here the social order is changing in ways which contrast dramatically with the more static nature of a status society. New institutions and values arise; associations become increasingly defended not because they exist but because they fulfill a function which can be more clearly seen and understood. The social order itself must be rationalized; reasoned explanations are called for. It is history which can more reasonably explain the origin, the nature and the function of various institutions and their interaction. Further, history seems able to point the direction in which a dynamic society is moving. It brings order out of the disordered array that is the consequence of change itself. As a result history is often used as the basis for a political philosophy which while explaining the past offers also a way to change the future. History thus operates ideologically. But by the very nature of its enterprise and the very kind of society which calls it into existence, historical interpretation cannot be effectively monopolized for long by any special class or group.[4] Its study is open to all who can reason and to all who participate in the various contractual or associational aspects of the society.

[3] This distinction, so important in modern historiographical discussion, is made effectively in Benedetto Croce, *History: Its Theory and Practice* (London, 1920).

[4] History arose in an effort to analyze new problems in a changing social order, problems now believed possible of such analysis by rational inquiry. Scientific inquiry had its origins in similar circumstances with the realization that the nature of the physical world was likewise amenable to such analysis. In both instances, of course, a special kind of professionalism developed. But again, in both instances, the existence of a special class of trained inquirers failed to give these men a real monopoly over their fields: others could use the results of such inquiries for their own purposes. This continues to be especially true in the study of history where special technical difficulties such as exist in today's scientific inquiry have really never developed. I am of course aware that there is in fact a kind of sociology of historians; not everyone was interested

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Obviously what I have presented in excessively brief form is a contrast of two models of social organization and one significant element in the world view an investigator might be expected to discover in each. In status societies the prevailing attitude toward the past is mythic and its function utopian; in a contract society the past is viewed historically with consequent ideological uses. Probably no such ideal types ever existed. Certainly, for example, a contract society does not surrender its mythic elements; the psychological and social need for myth seems to persist in the most dynamic and rationalized social organizations. For it is in the realm of myth, in my usage, to provide much of the vision, the hopes and the dreams of any group. Myth, therefore, continues as what I call the utopian element in any world view, although I would like to suggest that in a complex contract society the number and kinds of myths are multiplied and frequently conflict more dramatically than they would in an ideal status society.[5]

What is significant, then, about an historical approach to the past in the newer social order is not that it replaces a mythic approach or even that history sometimes finds itself in conflict with myth. I am not proposing only a battle between mythos and logos (although surely this too does exist) but a special interaction between myth and history, utopianism and ideology, which has significant cultural consequences for any society. History is frequently called upon to play a new role in relationship to the older mythic views. Perhaps a metaphor will explain what I have in mind. Myth traditionally provides the central drama of any social order—witness the sacred drama of the Christian myth. But history offers something vastly different in its ideal form. Since it is concerned with change,

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in history in every period. In the classical world history was generally written by and for members of the governing classes, for example. My point is simply that history *could* in fact be available to all who could read. It presented no special mysteries. Also, in the discussion that follows I am interested only in professional historians when they have an impact on the more general intellectual community. Obviously, after 1885 the professional historian is an important cultural fact, but I am more interested in the cultural consequences of the uses of history by intellectuals who may indeed not be professional historians.

[5] I realize that my social categories are "ideal types" that are not perhaps acceptable for more sophisticated social analysis but I believe that they can still be useful in a more general way, a rough background for my analysis. I am sorry, too, to insist on my own usage for the words "myth," "ideology," "history" and "utopia." I am well aware that others use these terms differently and, since precise definition would take more space than I may have, I hope that my meanings are clear from the context. I have been influenced in part by Kenneth Burke, "Ideology and Myth," *Accent*, VII (Summer 1947), 195-205. Mr. Burke sees myth as a way of stating a culture's "essence" in narrative terms. Two very important recent discussions of myth and ideology have been published by Ben Halpern: "The Dynamic Elements of Culture," *Ethics*, LXV (July 1955), 235-49; "'Myth' and 'Ideology' in Modern Usage," *History and Theory*, I (1961), 129-49.

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movement, the on-going course of action and ideas, since it is more clearly related to the dynamic aspects of social life, it provides what I have called an ideology as distinguished from a utopian vision. But the two frequently work hand in hand; myth provides the drama and history puts the show on the road. Myths often propose fundamental goals; history often defines and illuminates basic processes involved in achieving goals.

Philosophies of history—attitudes toward history as process—frequently influence the *kind* of action (or retreat to inaction) men adopt as a result of belief in a fundamental myth. If one needed further proof about this important relationship between myth and history, a brief examination of millennialist interpretations of history would prove most illuminating. All Christians believe in the central myth (and therefore promise) of their faith; but this belief clearly has different consequences culturally when coupled with different theories of history. Millennialism, as a special theory of history, is itself of crucial cultural importance. But those who hold a premillennialist view are going to act far differently in the world than those who hold a postmillennialist position, as any student of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century American intellectual and social history can attest, in spite of their fundamentally shared view of the truth of the Christian myth.[6]

In the complex relationship between myth and history within a culture it is clear that there are conditions which frequently lead to the attempt to use each cultural force—myth and history—in ways which emulate the natural function of the other. We are perhaps most clearly aware of the consequences that result from an attempt to make history into myth (or at least make history *perform* mythically). W. Lloyd Warner's extended discussion of the particular uses of American history in his latest Yankee City volume provides a most graphic instance. Here history has in fact become myth, complete with ritual, pageant and even a kind of priesthood. A relatively complex contract society is unified, the existing social order justified, basic values reinforced and community goals sanctified—all by resort to major incidents in Yankee City's history treated in mythic ways in which all citizens of the town are invited or perhaps socially compelled to share. In the process, however, something significantly different is made from history—and even the history of Yankee City and the U.S.A.—than as we usually think of it.[7]

[6] While this point is obvious it unfortunately escapes too many writers. Stow Persons is consistently excellent in indicating these differences and their significance in his *American Minds* (New York, 1958).

[7] *The Living and the Dead* (New Haven, 1959), pp. 101-225.

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But there is also a drive to make the myth something historically real; that is, to turn the utopian promise into a specific kind of ideology. The nineteenth century began its detailed search for an historical Christ, for example, undoubtedly to provide a rational basis for a belief in the Christian myth. But that very process of putting Christ *in* history has enormous cultural consequences for society and for the nature of Christianity itself. For once the chief mythic character of the Christian religion, the man-god who died and was reborn, became a figure within the limits of rational historical inquiry, he became subject to special interpretations and uses. Jesus became a great "representative man"—an idea which in its very nature was a threat to the mysteries of the Christian myth—who was a great moral teacher and prophet. By the end of the century the American people could be told that if they would truly walk "in His steps" they ought to become Christian socialists. They were presented with a set of immediate social consequences if He came to Chicago. Within a few decades He would become Comrade Christ, the social revolutionary.[8] Ideological consequences of a striking kind result from the effort to make a mythic vision of the past function as history. But, if only to emphasize the problem, that very act of making history out of myth, the act of treating Jesus as an historical figure shaped by historical conditions and circumstances and shaping in turn his society and world as any great man might, opens the way to a variety of ideological uses, not just one. History is seldom the monopoly of the few as the interpretation of the mystery of myth may indeed be in some cultures. And as a result, it is this same historical Christ who could become in 1925 "The Man Nobody Knows," the eminently successful salesman-businessman of Bruce Barton.

I have selected two extreme examples of history becoming myth and myth becoming history to establish my basic hypothesis. Yet somewhere in between there is a special meeting ground between history and myth that frequently provides a key to the central tensions within a culture. It is in this area of the tensions between established myths and developing ideologies, between the efforts of converting history to mythic ends and of using history in its more traditionally ideological way, where much of the story will have to be told. This conflict is often quite clearly recognized by many intellectuals within the culture. Artists, especially, are able to see and use this important intellectual and cultural fact. Two novels will perhaps indicate the existence of this awareness. In Mel-

[8] For examples of this transformation see Upton Sinclair's extraordinary anthology of the literature of social protest, *The Cry for Justice* (Philadelphia, 1915). Book VII, 345-82, is called "Jesus" and in it appear many examples of the use of the historical Jesus as a figure of social protest.

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ville's *Billy Budd* many commentators have seen the significant use of both the myth of Christ and the myth of Adam. But too few have seen that these mythic representations are put into a very special and carefully defined historical context. For Melville goes to great lengths to set his scene within history—precisely and in some detail, with dates, events and all the trappings of historical reality. We see the mythic enactments against the backdrop of meticulously established historical detail, a particular time and place, a particular series of historically true events. It is the tension between the historical demands (ideology) and the mythic ones (utopia) that gives the novel its tragic pertinence. Sixty years later William Faulkner was to use the same kind of central tension in *A Fable*. The enactment of the Christ myth is again presented against a most specific and realistic historical background. Not only does Faulkner place his tale during the First World War as Melville did his during the aftermath of the French Revolution, but he also uses an amazing number of details that come from the actual history of that war. Thus it is this very tension between the mythic beliefs of a people— their visions, their hopes, their dreams—and the on-going, dynamic demands of their social life recorded by the students of the real past and the actual present (with perhaps an often implied future) which provides many artists with their theme, a theme reflecting a basic conflict within the culture itself. This is in fact one of the basic tensions which helps define the nature and kind of culture that exists.

American civilization begins with a unique set of cultural circumstances. On the shores of New England a group of able intellectuals—some ministers, others reflecting their important university training—established a kind of social order that was clearly, by definition, a contract society. It was organized on the theoretical base composed of a series of major compacts; it was prepared to carry out an on-going mission within history, the task no less than the reformation of the whole world. It was also, however, a social order committed with grave earnestness to a belief in the Christian myth. But intellectually, for its particular kind of organization to survive and its mission to be fulfilled, the myth alone, no matter how interpreted, would not suffice. It is always important to remember that this was a society dominated largely by those we would today call intellectuals. The nineteenth-century image of the alienated intellectual would surely seem strange to these Puritans, even to the Hutchinsons and Williamses and Taylors who were driven from the colony or forced to keep their private thoughts very private indeed. And these intellectuals who functioned as leaders from the very beginnings of the enterprise carried with them a special view of history;

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they made the study of history and its interpretation a vital part of the cultural development of the colony. The view of history which the settlers and those who followed brought was one which clearly explained, defined and justified the specific kind of contractual society they proposed to establish and develop. The writing of history, the keeping of journals at least in part for historical purposes, the discussions of history in various sermons and addresses makes clear the central role—second only I would argue to the expounding of the Christian myth itself and its meanings—of historical inquiry to the colonizing efforts. For it is history which provides the ideology, the dynamic view that makes possible the onward movement of the society to its historically appointed task. The tension between the promise of the Christian myth and its obligations upon man and the promise of their special view of history and its demands forms a central theme in any analysis of the culture they built.

By the end of the seventeenth century that brilliant series of covenants and compromises, that essential tension between myth and ideology directed by America's first intellectual elite, had broken down forever. In an almost final gesture, Cotton Mather characteristically resorted again to history in an effort to restore the old order socially and intellectually. But the age was over, the tensions too great; nothing—not even Mather's monumental and most significant history—could save it. Two important groups, both denied an effective place within the old order, were now ready to face each other in a major struggle reflecting again a basic tension in the eighteenth century. Each had its own view of the nature of the process of history, derived in some measure from the original Puritan synthesis but each stressing its special aspects as ideology for its own kind and class.

The revivalists of the Great Awakening took the millennialist and providential elements of the old synthesis as their own. In their frankly supernatural view of history they saw in the revival movement itself the hope of the coming millennium. In their enthusiastic and optimistic view they were committed, then, to a theory of history which might provide an effective threat to the social order and stability in the name of the currently disinherited. On the other hand, the new leaders of the American social order who had taken over after the older Puritan leadership had faltered found it necessary to fight back with a philosophy of history and a view of American development that could be used to defend the newly-arrived-at contractual order in which they were now the elite, intellectually and socially. Stow Persons has shown with acute awareness how these men developed a cyclical theory of history without signi-

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ficant reference to the Christian myth and yet without attempting to deny this mythic vision directly. Rather, they stressed the law and order which ruled the universe in terms of clearly discernible moral qualities, qualities reflected most effectively in the accumulation of property and position, in the special moral character exemplified by their own group in society. Thus their theory of history justified the new social order and their place in it and sought to counter the "dangerous" theories of the enthusiasts and millennialists of the revival movement.[9]

The intellectual tensions of the century—and in some sense the real social tensions as well—were reflected in a basic conflict of historical theories, one in which the Christian myth was about to be actualized in time and thus posed a radical threat to the stability of the social order, and the other in which the Christian myth itself had become some sort of regularized goal at the end of history, a goal which might be best achieved through the orderly and moral progress of men under the leadership of those of good character and sound social position. The conservative philosophy of history of the Enlightenment in America largely dominated public policy and the newer intellectuals who espoused it continued to maintain effective control in society as had an earlier elite in Puritan New England.

By the second and third decades of the nineteenth century several important new factors could be witnessed on the American cultural scene. First, the intellectuals in the society could no longer easily assume that through the professions of the ministry or the law social power would be assured to them within the American community. The problem of vocation for the intellectual in America became for the first time a serious issue: for this reason Emerson's soul-searching struggle to find a proper vocation becomes a key symbolic instance for the student of the role of the intellectual in America. Secondly, the emergence of the idea of progress in its variant forms provided an easy view of the nature of history for every man and an all too easy rationalism that engulfed all before it. So much had history taken hold in American society that the very mystical and intuitive nature of fundamental myths seemed to lose place and meaning for many. So easily did the notion of progress adapt all events past and present to its use that the whole social order became too readily (for some) justified—any change, any development, any direction.

[9] "The Cyclical Theory of History in Eighteenth Century America," *American Quarterly*, VI (Summer 1954), 147-63. This seems to me one of the most important articles on the Enlightenment in America and yet it is not sufficiently well known or used by those who continue to talk about the period in traditional ways, be they the ways of a Becker or a Boorstin.

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For those who felt these dislocations there were several courses open. They might reject history in its currently accepted sense and seek beyond it or apart from it some sense of the importance and meaning of life. This, of course, was the path of Emerson and Thoreau who refused to allow rational historical analysis to take away from them the transcendental vision of the basic myths they still wished to and needed to believe in. If history did have a value, it was not the history as on-going process but rather the study of what might be abstracted from the past as a standard in the present—exactly those transcendent virtues and ideas that were unaffected by the relativities of the historical process itself.

This particular use of the past was of course not new nor was it uniquely the property of Emerson and his followers. The eighteenth-century elite had drawn on its studies of the classical world for models of behavior and conduct; the nineteenth century frequently found ideal patterns for society and morals (as well as art and architecture) in a special and static vision of the Middle Ages, Gothic and Romanesque; the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century looked especially to the glories of the Renaissance for standards of taste, virtue and judgment; and in the early twentieth century the American Humanists (following what they believed to be the lead of the Renaissance Humanists) again proposed a vision of the classical world as ideal. But such a use of history—abstract, outside of time and circumstances, detached from the whole process of development—was largely a device to overcome, to halt, to stem the tide of the on-going process itself. It was almost always the tool of a small elite and its effect was seldom widely felt. It was, in my terms, essentially an anti-historical use of history. Its function was mythic in purpose, but it failed too often to elicit a proper mythic response from the mass of society—no matter how monumental and overpowering its architectural representations all over the American landscape.

Perhaps more effective but still limited in appeal was the resort to myths of a purer kind in which more of the community might easily share. R.W.B. Lewis has sketched for us the story of *The American Adam* which deals with a major aspect of that effort. And if Emerson and the transcendentalists generally failed to reaffirm the vital mystery of their particular vision of the Godhead to large numbers of Americans, the continuing revivalist tradition did keep alive a more readily emotional and social response to the Christian myth, although in this case once again usually related to a millennialist historical view whose considerable consequence I have previously suggested. The transcendentalist and revivalist attempts to reassert the value and function of myth in American society are, after all, parts of a single process and in some very real sense tran-

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scendentalism can well be considered a kind of revivalism among the intellectuals.

But there were intellectuals in this period who did not turn away from the study of history itself. One of the most significant aspects of the intellectual history of the mid-nineteenth century is the special effort made by American intellectuals to recapture control over the study of history itself as a vehicle of intellectual and social influence and power. Most of these intellectuals had been trained, initially, for either the law or the ministry, the previous career patterns available to those intellectuals who sought power in American society.[10] These intellectuals trained themselves in the best of the methods provided by the newer "scientific" historical scholarship then thriving in Germany. They were, moreover, much admired and much read by a goodly segment of the American community. In an age when a special kind of historical imagination flourished, these intellectuals discovered that through the writing of history itself they might achieve some of the ends their more a-historical fellows were unable to achieve.

But in capturing, in some meaningful sense at least, part of the intellectual leadership through their study of history, what ends were the Bancrofts and the Sparkses, the Prescotts and the Parkmans actually seeking? David Levin ably has shown how they conceived of history as a "romantic art" and how clearly they used the major devices of that art in their works of scholarship.[11] They wrote colorful narrative history; they made characters and events come alive. But such history—and it is again being called for in our own age—with all its serious and studied scholarship yields itself to fulfilling the very kind of mythic function (albeit much more popularly received) in a way that the more self-conscious non-historical mythic efforts of the period seemingly failed to do. Almost always narrative history attempts a mythic function and the more carefully analytical history (most characteristic in the monographs and studies in the period from 1890 to 1940) lends itself to ideological uses. In the unstable world of the nineteenth century, filled with change, teeming with developments bent on upsetting the fundamental nature of the social order itself—developments which were to include a civil war—these great historians of the middle of the century produced American epics. They provided, perhaps, a way of understanding what was happening through an almost mystical notion of the divine law of progress,

[10] I have often wondered whether there is any significance in the fact that most of those who were originally headed for a career in law generally selected European history as their field of inquiry while those prepared for the ministry, like Sparks and Bancroft, devoted themselves to the American story.

[11] *History as a Romantic Art,* (Stanford, Cal., 1959).

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as in the case of Bancroft. Here is history offering hope without program, faith without a searching investigation of basic issues and problems. In the words of R. W. B. Lewis, Bancroft's kind of history was a demonstration "in historical terms of the validity of the hopeful legend, the legend of the second chance." [12] In the case of Parkman, on the other hand, history became a kind of tragedy, the unfulfilled promise of both savagery and civilization. But whether optimistic or pessimistic, the histories of the period provided certain fundamental values, a certain commitment to moral law, certain reinforcement through examples of exemplary social and political behavior. In spite of all their scholarship and science, then, these epic accounts are mythic in consequence in maintaining older social arrangements and values, utopian in essence and objective. These historians try to speak out as high priests in charge of interpreting a newer and more scientifically composed mythology. It is perhaps not surprising that a scholar like R. W. B. Lewis should discover mythic elements in their work similar to that in the work of some of those who rejected traditional historical analysis.

Mid-nineteenth-century American intellectuals adopted an approach to the study of the past that led to a fundamentally utopian outlook; the method of analysis was primarily mythic—no matter what the more formal trappings. This attitude toward history and toward the world itself reached a most dramatic climax in the 1880s—the decade in which more Americans sought to outline in print their utopian visions than perhaps any other decade in our history.[13] Significantly, however, most of these attempts to devise a utopia were presented without any ideological basis which might indicate how the existing social order could propel itself toward the achievement of such a new and ideal ordering of society.

The intellectual historian fond of dramatic contrasts might delight in comparing the essential utopian outlook of much thought of the 1880s with the fundamental return to the historical vision of the 1890s. Such a contrast might easily, it is true, be overdrawn. But nevertheless, here, amidst a series of basic problems too harsh to be overlooked, too significantly earnest and demanding of immediate attention to be judged on the basis of a mythic view of some distant future, history emerged again as a vehicle for the intellectual with a new and special set of functions significantly in line with the ideological usefulness of certain attitudes toward history.

Many defenders of Frederick Jackson Turner and many critics have tried to sum up his greatness. Many have pointed to a considerable group

[12] *The American Adam* (Chicago, 1955), p. 161.

[13] V. L. Parrington Jr., *American Dreams* (Providence, 1947) is an account of utopian works with a good checklist of titles.

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of forerunners or precursors who held views similar to his. But the genius of Turner was essentially a simple and yet vital one culturally. He took a major American myth and made from it effective history. He took a utopian set of attitudes and beliefs and made them ideologically effective for his own times. First, he compiled no great narrative, used almost none of the current literary conventions. His was an effort in analysis. His starting point was not some vague feeling of instability but a set of specific problems in the American scene which were of significant moment in his own era—labor unrest, the farmers' revolt, the consequences of a vast new immigration, the rise of urban problems, a world-wide depression in the face of a world-wide transportation and communications revolution. He wanted to account for these problems; he wanted to suggest why they had not arisen previously in our history. He made, therefore, the frontier thesis, a long-established myth as many authorities agree, a major tool for social analysis. What is more, since he could reveal *why* America had developed the way she had, since he knew the key ingredient in producing the kind and quality of social institutions and character types that made America unique, his analysis might more easily provide some clues about what must be done to preserve that order. Thus his analysis might make it possible for one to act—not resign oneself to the myth of a second chance with some inevitable progress under God's benign direction nor surrender to the essential tragedy of the human condition nor carry on precisely as one had in the past under the leadership of one's betters.[14]

I hope this analysis will not be taken as approval of the kind of approach Turner and his followers undertook, or the kind of ideology that emerged in part because of that approach. Rather, I am suggesting that what followed from this kind of history was precisely that—an ideology and moreover one which was in striking ways to become in part the official American ideology since at least 1893. If from 1893 to 1963 Americans find themselves committed to a search for new frontiers to replace the one Turner announced was no more, they do so in large part because the study of history pointed the way ideologically. It is precisely because this did become a major ideological force, adapted to many ends in the America of the twentieth century, that there has been such a wide-scale

[14] It is important at this juncture to recall Turner's extraordinary essay on "The Significance of History" which antedates his more famous paper of 1893 and which is really one of the earliest statements in the "New History" position that Beard and Robinson were to espouse. This essay is reprinted in *The Varieties of History,* ed. Fritz Stern (New York, 1956), pp. 197-208. For the setting out of which the Turner thesis itself came see Lee Benson, "The Historical Background of Turner's Frontier Essay," *Agricultural History,* XXV (April 1951), 59-82.

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public debate on the validity of the so-called Turner thesis and that important groups of American intellectuals found it necessary to discuss the values which followed from a frontier America, values which some were trying to preserve in our century while others equally vigorously were trying to disavow them.[15]

Out of the historical awareness that dawned in the 1890s in America came still another example of the importance of history as ideology. This involves another pattern of historical inquiry. If Turner turned a myth into history, others in the period, again for ideological purposes, attempted to take the mythic out of what had previously passed for history. All through the nineteenth century there had been a rumbling of dissatisfaction with the inheritance from seventeenth-century Puritan theology and social organization and values. One can point to many landmarks along the way which reveal the challenge to the Puritan tradition that had become so important a part of official American mythology. But the real explosion occurred in the 1890s—an explosion that was to continue to reverberate throughout American intellectual life until the 1940s.

For any student of culture one question must seem apparent at the outset. Why should anyone bother to attack the life and ideas of men long dead or a social order no longer in existence? Why, after all, in any culture should anyone, save perhaps those professionally involved with the study of the past, care about what the seventeenth century was *really* like? Yet in that great era of historical awareness beginning roughly in the 1890s, American intellectuals *did* care. They cared because they realized the vital ideological importance in a society like ours of history and the "proper" attitudes toward it. They cared because they realized that views held about the past generally had consequences for the present. It was not simply that the past "determined" the present in some rather simple casual order of things, but that the way one viewed the past had significant consequences on the way one acted in the present. It was precisely because in our kind of social order history becomes a key to ideology, a key to the world view that shapes programs and actions in the present and future. At least this was a fundamental view of the majority of American intellectuals in the period between 1890 and 1940. Since current ideology is based on a particular view of the nature of the past, since present problems are frequently solved by reference to the way past experience dealt with similar problems, the control over the

[15] I have discussed this point in my article "The Useless Past: American Intellectuals and the Frontier Thesis, 1910-1930," *Bucknell Review*, XI (March 1963), 1-20. For ideological consequences of the kind I mean, see, for example, William Appleman Williams, "The Frontier Thesis and American Foreign Policy," *The Pacific Coast Historical Review*, XXIV (November 1955), 379-95.

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interpretation of the nature of that past becomes a burning cultural issue. This is, in effect, the driving force behind the movement James Harvey Robinson called the "New History" in 1913; it colors the achievements of other professional historians like Charles Beard and Carl Becker.[16] And it is not beside the point that these historians, like Turner, played significant roles in the general culture of their era that went way beyond their purely professional responsibilities. These attitudes in fact came generally to be held by a generation or more of intellectuals who were in no sense professional historians.

There is, of course, still a further assumption behind this historic struggle within history itself. Not only is it important that we have the "right" view of the past, the proper attitudes toward history, if we are to operate effectively in the world today and tomorrow, but also the right view, the proper attitudes *can* help us to solve our problems and change the course of the stream of history itself. This is why Van Wyck Brooks' call in 1918 for a "usable past" made sense to American intellectuals all through the period under discussion, no matter how they might agree or disagree about which view of the past was most especially useful. There was a basic agreement that an intelligent reading of the past might make possible man's intelligent direction over the future course of history.

The preoccupation of the brothers Adams with special phases of the American past is well known by students of our civilization. Further, there has been extensive discussion of these remarkable men against the background of the very special problems they faced as intellectuals in a society in which they seemed to have, in the current social order of their day, little place or function. They fit rather easily into the image of the alienated intellectual, that image which began to emerge significantly on the American scene in the nineteenth century. But the special relationship between this seeming lack of function and their interest in the study of the past has not been sufficiently explored. For as "aliens" seeking positions of intellectual authority and power, they did not follow the path of the transcendentalists in turning against the past or the tradition of the historians of the earlier days of the century who would become high priests for society by turning history into a special mythic form, an epic art. Rather, they turned to the study of the past in an effort to find a new ideological position that they could offer in refutation of accepted contemporary ideologies, ideologies justified by a view of the past currently in vogue and for them significantly untrue and dangerous.

[16] See Morton White, *Social Thought in America* (New York, 1949) and Cushing Strout, *The Pragmatic Revolt in American History* (New Haven, 1958).

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If they told the story of the Antinomian controversy, for example, they did so not simply to set the record straight. (How few historians, professional or otherwise, really seem interested in the pastness of the past!) They did so because they believed that the defense of Puritan America, which had become part of the official creed, perpetuated values and social attitudes intolerable to them, impossible for the America they would see develop. If Brooks Adams, more forcefully than any figure before him and in advance of the more sophisticated analysis of the same relation made slightly later by Max Weber, undertook to relate the development of modern capitalism and the Reformation, he did so because he found Puritan values reinforcing capitalist values and the resultant social and economic organization destructive of the kind of culture he wished to see flourish in America. If as a result of the new economic man who emerged as a major social type from the fusion of capitalism and protestantism it was, as he believed, impossible to have a decent art, architecture and literature, and it was unlikely that an effective civilization could endure in the United States, obviously something must be done to modify if not overthrow the ruling ideology that perpetuated this social type. *The Law of Civilization and Decay* was in effect a kind of "new history." The philosophies of history advanced by Brooks and Henry Adams were not simply statements of pessimistic surrender to the world as it was, but a new reading of how the world got that way: an effective, critical beginning of a search for a new ideology that might produce a culture more agreeable. It would not be easy to achieve this reorganization, but the place to begin was clearly with a re-examination of the past and the effort to discover from such study the possible new laws that might provide a new dynamic approach to the world's problems. At the same time, of course, it might provide a new role for the intellectual as agent of discovery, critic of the old history, the old social order and the old ideology, and liaison to the new men of power bringing them a new history, a new ideology, new insights for the development of programs of action. If the older view of the Puritan past sanctified the purging of individualist dissent or the more vicious values and consequences of capitalism, it must give way to a new view, a true view of what the Puritans *really* were.

This form of intellectual activity became common in the period after 1890. The whole of American history and its official version came under the scrutiny of American intellectuals in a way unique in our development. The frontier past and its consequences for culture, the Puritan tradition and its results were but two areas of growing concern on the part of those who sought from a newer version of the American past some

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new orientation for American civilization itself.[17] It became especially the function of the intellectual to find a useful past, a version of American history and of the nature of history itself that would propel America on to the road to a desirable culture or at least provide the critical tools with which to overthrow the official view—the view Van Wyck Brooks suggested put a "talmudic seal" on institutions, values and policies repellent to these intellectuals. Brooks and Lewis Mumford, for example, felt they must rewrite our literary history, if only to provide some new basis for literature in their own time and some worthwhile relationship between the artist, the intellectual, and his society. Other intellectuals joined suit; their useful pasts frequently differed and they quarreled about this among themselves. Southern agrarians, for whom the nature of the southern past became a matter of vital concern, an obsession that led literary men to write history and biography, found their view of the past directly challenged, for example, by the views of a growing number of Marxist intellectuals. Some were concerned only with "debunking" the past—a new and rather common pastime, introducing a new word into the language itself; others developed more profound philosophies of history. But the fundamental point remains: during this era in our intellectual development attitudes toward history played a key role in many debates and all seemed to agree that some special view of the past was necessary, some view of history which challenged the assumed truths about the past and the ideological positions based on such "truths."

The extraordinary importance placed on the control of the past was reflected in all fields of activity. The Social Gospel movement depended upon its special version of history and its special view of Christ's mission in history. Certain factions of the so-called Progressive movement made the "New History" a key ally. It is ironic to think that a book as dry, painfully detailed and scholarly as Beard's *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* could become a work of political significance—but it did for some Progressives. The New Criticism in literature (and the new literature itself), while frequently believed to be antagonistic to historical study, was in fact simply antagonistic to special versions of history. Many literary figures found themselves in their battles with the entrenched literary standards of the day forced to rewrite the whole of literary history to support their own critical and creative activities. T. S. Eliot is but one outstanding example of a "New Critic" who gave us, in rough outlines at least, a brand new version of European literary history. The most advanced movements in the arts frequently were based in large part on

[17] This present paper barely suggests one of the major attacks on the Puritan past. I am at work on a fuller analysis of the whole question. But see esp. Frederick J. Hoffman, "Philistine and Puritan in the 1920's," *American Quarterly*, I (Fall 1949), 247-63.

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a profound restudy of the past, be it in painting, in architecture or in music, in an effort to support the newer visions.

It is striking to examine from this perspective some of the major literary figures and their most important works. Here again the artist believed that somehow it was his special function (a function that would afford him special status, a way out of alienation) to make history his own, to offer in his art a vision of that history that would be more meaningful for culture. Ezra Pound became deeply involved in the study of America's past—as well as the past of Europe and China. *The Cantos* represent a major effort to come to grips with historical materials and to use them in a special mythic way. To many students of our civilization it must seem strange indeed to discover in the body of this complex and difficult work not simply allusions to John Adams and Martin Van Buren (two of Pound's special American heroes whom he believes American official history has ignored) but long passages from the writings of these men and other historical figures. For Pound was trying to "make it new" in this as in other areas, to provide for his audience some newer insight into what he believed was the true nature of the American tradition and therefore the special promise of American life. Hart Crane's *The Bridge* likewise insists on a special historical vision. And the career of William Carlos Williams can be assessed in terms of a persistent effort—from his earliest work to the end of his brilliant career—to make meaningful his nation's history in a special mythopoetic way. Williams is especially clear about his objective; he wished to make the past alive and important in the present. Official or "scientific history" was for Williams a lie. It was the kind of history that "portrays us in generic patterns, like effigies or the carving on sarcophagi, which say nothing save, of such and such a man, that he is dead." It is the pastness of the past which is dangerous for a culture. We need history, for when we regret the past, not realizing that "what we are has its origins in what *the nation* in the past has been," we lose immeasurably because of our ignorance. The past, as brought to new and meaningful light by the artist's imagination which makes it present to us all, is "our greatest well of inspiration, our greatest hope of freedom (since the future is totally blank, if not black.)" [18]

Thus the culture of America in the period between 1890 and 1940 was based in large measure on a view of the importance of history in solving human problems on every level and on a firm commitment to the special role that the intellectual might develop for himself in a world in which he felt alien as critic of the official ideology and champion of the truer meanings of the nation. Toward the end of this period, it is clear, what

[18] *In the American Grain* (New York, 1925), pp. 188, 109, 189. Italics in the original.

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Richard Chase has called *The Quest for Myth* again became a major occupational and imaginative concern for many artists and intellectuals. The need for myth began to reassert itself—be it the Christian myth or any number of mythic visions out of history. As depression and world war engulfed the world, the stabilizing and utopian function of myth again seemed important. But throughout the major portion of the period, leading figures dealt directly with the tensions created between history as myth and history as ideology in a brilliant effort to make a new civilization and to make it move in directions established by a newer historical view. It is this fact which gives special tone to the period and can in part be held responsible for the very special kind of cultural consequences that developed.[10]

The last two decades in America have been marked by a singularly anti-historical spirit among the leading figures of our intellectual life. This trend, of course, had existed as a sharp undercurrent during the previous era as part of the ever-present tension between myth and ideology. I have already indicated the beginnings of what were to be a ground swell of interest in and search for (even conscious creation, if that is possible) myth. T. S. Eliot's career can be seen, from one perspective, as a continual lyric battle raging within the poet himself between the mythic and the ideological, between the utopian vision and the historical. The "cunning passages, contrived corridors" of history that Eliot speaks of always presented for him dangerous traps from which man finally must escape. In *Four Quartets* it becomes clear to the poet that "right action is freedom from past and future also," a vision of man in relation to history that stands in effective contrast to the views of his contemporary, William Carlos Williams, cited previously.

In the realm of religion the historically-oriented Social Gospel no longer commands the allegiance of the major Protestant intellectual leaders. The existential eye sees no historic Christ and no Christian mission that can be accomplished within time. The ideology of the Social Gospel depended upon a specific role of Christ in history and a view of the nature of history that made possible the achievement within history of a Christian society. The existential temper sees in the mythic Christ a "concrete absolute" which provided the model for those who would have the "Courage to Be" but who realize that within the relativities of history it is not really possible for man to solve any important problem facing him.

[10] It might be well to recall at this point that the two novels I discussed in the first section of this paper in effect mark the beginning and end of the period under discusion, Melville's novella at the start of the era and Faulkner's novel marking in some real sense the end of an era.

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Many of our newer literary vogues—some of them brilliantly evocative of major moral dilemmas of our time to be sure—are deliberately wedded to the present moment alone. For the Beat Generation the past—and even the future—is an enemy, threatening man with a vicious traditionalism (sometimes called conformity) or a series of problems to which there is no solution except individual action. They return to an almost Thoreau-like ritual burning of the past, preferring the immediate sensation, the experience of the moment or the escape into timelessness offered by some oriental philosophies (or their versions of them) which are strictly a-historical. Our leading movements in painting, especially abstract expressionism and "pop" art, offer the most immediate kind of experience, more clearly divorced from any sense of history than any other movement in painting since the Renaissance.

The study of history as a discipline has again become major literature, frequently superbly written and compiled, but often based on an underlying assumption clearly taken from American existential theology and stated most effectively by one of our leading intellectuals who is himself the writer of much admired history:

> History is not a redeemer, promising to solve all human problems in time; nor is man capable of transcending the limitation of his being. Man generally is entangled in insoluble problems; history is a constant tragedy in which we are all involved, whose keynote is anxiety and frustration, not progress and fulfillment.[20]

It is a history, then, which escapes from ideology (in my sense) by returning to the mythic and dramatic. It specifically attacks the ideologies and the theories of history from which they came in the previous era. In its hostility to a Beard or a Turner it offers no new system of analysis, no new theory of the operation of the historical process. Rather, it disapproves of such theories and such ideologies. Once again, as in the middle of the nineteenth century, we return characteristically to the multivolume narrative historical work. In Arthur Schlesinger Jr. we discover our new Bancroft, ironically a pessimistic Bancroft. In Allan Nevins we find our own Parkman, albeit a surprisingly optimistic Parkman. And in Admiral Morison's brilliant and many-volume history of the Navy during the Second World War we have perhaps the greatest literary achievement by any historian in our century. But in these works we look in vain for

[20] This is of course from Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s famous *Partisan Review* essay "The Causes of the American Civil War: A Note on Historical Sentimentalism," written in 1949. The essay is most conveniently found in *The Causes of the American Civil War*, ed. E. C. Rozwenc (Boston, 1961). The passage I have quoted appears on pp. 189-90 in that text.

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a vision of the past which will enable us to remake the present and the future. Here ideology is specifically rejected. Here we find a history which offers a reinforcement of current moral values and no effective challenge to the decision makers within the social order who *do* most frequently operate in terms of some view of history, some ideology. It is characteristic, in fact, of many American intellectuals these days to talk about how Americans have traditionally solved the problems that faced them—when they were in fact able to solve them at all—pragmatically and without reference to ideology. But the fact remains that there are many ways to solve a given problem and the choice of specific solution is frequently determined by a set of attitudes toward history which may be unarticulated but are within the consciousness. And if this paper has any validity at all, it should be clear that a retreat from ideology to the mythic use of the past has its special cultural consequences as well. Thus our own age retreats from history or derives intense excitement from what is often called "history" in its most brilliant mythic or theological forms (witness the enthusiastic response to the works of Toynbee and Niebuhr). The escape from history leads us to the world of myth. And yet, surprisingly, in terms of my definition of myth, the new mythic vision seems almost anything but utopian, seems to offer no happy goals for man or culture. We are left with a mythic past, an anxious present and an anti-utopian, Orwellian future.

What I have briefly attempted to sketch in roughest and most general terms were five major periods reflecting the relationships between history and myth as they were developed by American intellectuals responding to the circumstances of their own eras. In the first social order, intellectuals led the way in attempting to stabilize the tension between myth and history to protect the very special contract society they had organized and to enable it to fulfill its mission within history. In the eighteenth century, in the wake of the failure of the first position, the newer intellectual and social elite continued to dominate with its own special conservative philosophy of history, highly rationalized and secularized, removed from the power of the Christian myth. This myth, however, supported by a millennialist philosophy of history, continued to galvanize the sons of the Great Awakening who found themselves in intellectual and social battle with the sons of the Enlightenment. With the special conditions and problems of the early nineteenth century came an entirely new approach to the problem and American intellectuals became, through the use of history but with the repudiation of its rational powers, essentially the mythologists of America, the creators and revitalizers of a series of major myths which dominated the culture and determined its signifi-

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cantly utopian intellectual quality. In the last decade of the century a new intellectual order was born on the heels of a new social order created in part by the communications revolution, an order in which a special kind of historical awareness contributed a dynamic element and where once again the intellectuals, removed from seats of social or political power but frequently anxious to achieve such power or contribute to its effective use, brought to life for their own present a special new tension between the mythic and the historic, stressing the ideological significance of their work. Finally, in our own day history has become once again the enemy, useful only if it points up the mythic tragedy of our inability to solve our problems in any meaningful sense.

Of course there are still those conscious of history, although ironically it would seem that these days to have some view of the past which has clear-cut ideological consequences for the present and future is generally thought of as a special function of what is left of a radical tradition. But it is not unfair to see in the major intellectual trends of the years since World War II a fundamentally anti-historical view of the world. It is in fact a view which has been praised as marking the end of innocence or the end of ideology. But the cultural consequences of this triumph, so-called, over ideology, so-called, have yet to be assessed. In a world where leading intellectuals become committed to a view that human problems cannot really be solved, where the public ideology therefore too often goes unchallenged in our incredibly bipartisan age, where history flourishes most brilliantly in epic or mythic or theological forms, and yet where enormous problems do continue to confront us, there are grave dangers to the culture itself. But the fundamental tensions between the mythic and the ideological still remain, even though the balance may be tipped more to one side at the moment. Perhaps we are simply re-enacting the plot of our story as it was played out in the middle decades of the nineteenth century where once again great and frightening changes seemed too often more than man could handle. Perhaps there will yet be a reawakening, as there was in the 1890s, to the other real need and function of history in our kind of society. Perhaps there will even be another kind of social order.

Afternote

In a recent Cooper Union lecture, "The Linkage of Human Events," I tried to deal with the broader cultural, philosophical, and historiographic implications of this subject, attempting to use the many criticisms and suggestions received in reference to this paper to sharpen my analytical tools. In this brief

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note all I can do is to clarify certain basic intentions. The paper does not argue that historians and their work are shaped by cultural situations. This is both obviously true and trite. Rather, I am trying to show that the *ways* in which the past is treated, the structure and form of historical thought, are of consequence *for* the development of a culture. Some readers felt my "myth-ideology" distinctions a belaboring of the obvious; others that the discussion obfuscated rather than clarified. I did *not* try to argue that a particular kind of culture had only one particular form of presenting the past. Although I did allude to the cultural origins of various forms, I was more interested in later *tensions* that developed in various periods, sometimes between forms themselves, sometimes between forms and the ongoing cultural situation. Recent work has been an effort to provide additional and I hope persuasive test cases: a paper on the uses of our Puritan Past; one on Henry Ford and History; and current work on nineteenth-century millenialism. I have not published these studies as yet but I intend ultimately to put the whole together in a book for which this essay will serve as a basic outline or initial sketch.

Obviously, the bibliographic grounding of this paper and my work in this area is extensive and cuts into a variety of fields. There are, however, some recent works of considerable importance, most of them published after this article appeared, that should be cited here. While this paper attempted to make it clear that I was not primarily concerned with professional historians, there are now two essential books if we are to understand the development of historical study in the United States: David D. Van Tassell, *Recording America's Past, 1607–1884* (Chicago, 1960) and for the twentieth century John Higham, *History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965). David Noble's *Historians Against History* (Minneapolis, 1966) is a stimulating study. It may be in some ways wrongheaded and not deeply enough related to other key cultural developments, but it is a significant book with which we must reckon. Finally, I should like to cite H. Trevor Colburn's model of what a serious and masterful analysis of the uses of history can be. His *The Lamp of Experience* (Chapel Hill, 1966) analyzes the special role the Whig historical tradition played in the ideological backgrounds of the American Revolution.

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Louis D. Rubin, Jr.

Tom Sawyer and the Use of Novels

BECAUSE MARK TWAIN is so important a figure in American literary history, and because *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) is his first work of fiction, there is the temptation to dwell on the historical aspects of the novel. Like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), it can be approached as a guide to what life was like along the Mississippi in the years before the Civil War, as a mirror of the pivotal position the Missouri region occupied in the slavery controversy, as a species of "frontier humor," and so on.

Such investigations are often extremely interesting. Yet when one is finished, this question remains: what can *Tom Sawyer* tell us about American life that any of a half-dozen almost forgotten but "representative" novels could not do better? Or that diaries, letters, memoirs, newspaper accounts could not do with much greater authenticity? And does not the frontier humor approach place an American classic such as *Tom Sawyer* on exactly the same plane as a much less accomplished work such as the *Flush Times in Alabama and Mississippi?*

In other words, if we use literature as history, then the more imaginative the work of literature, the less "accurate" it seems to be as history. So that if history is our subject, might it not be wiser to eschew Mark Twain's novels in favor of those by men less imaginative and more literal in their writings?

All that is literary in us very naturally rebels against such a conclusion. Our major writers *should* be able to tell us more about our country's life than their less perceptive contemporaries, and if it seems to work out the other way, then perhaps the fault may lie not with our major writers but in the way we try to use their work. It may be that, in attempting to study American life as portrayed in *Tom Sawyer*, we fail to consider it as a novel at all, but as a document. We treat it as a compendium of raw material for research, as an accumulation of facts, when the truth is that the chief reason for paying any attention at all to Tom Sawyer is that it is *not* merely an accumulation of facts. It is a story; it is a unit. It is a work of art.

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It may be, then, that in using *Tom Sawyer* as a factual guide to life on the big river, we neglect it as literature, when it is precisely the literary considerations that give the novel its excellence. The one question we should be asking about it first of all might well be, What happens? What is the plot of the novel? Who are the characters, in particular who is the protagonist, and what happens to them and to him? What, in short, is this novel about *as a novel?*

A small boy grows up a little during one summer in a town on the Mississippi. He is a romantic, highly imaginative little fellow, who enjoys playing at pirates, outlaws and other fanciful pursuits. He lives with his Aunt Polly, a long-suffering lady whose prosaic outlook on things causes him no little inconvenience. His closest friend is a devil-may-care lad named Huckleberry Finn, who accompanies him on his adventures. Tom has a girl, too, whom he wants mightily to impress.

In the course of his summer's activities he searches for buried treasure, sees a dastardly murder perpetrated by a half-breed named Injun Joe, testifies in court as to what he saw, discovers a real treasure, goes off on a picnic with Becky Thatcher, is lost in a cave, finally makes his way to safety, and returns in triumph to claim his share of the treasure.

At the beginning of the novel, Tom is just another boy, distinguished chiefly perhaps for the quality of the devilment he can plan. In the eyes of the townsfolk—those who notice him at all—he is a child, with absurd, romantic dreams of success and grandeur, and one whose conduct is not beyond reproach.

Yet when the summer is over and the novel closes, what is Tom's station in life? He has won the eternal fealty of his girl friend. He is exceedingly wealthy. He has solved a murder mystery. He is the town hero. From being just another boy, he has risen to be someone quite important in community affairs.

This is what happens in *Tom Sawyer,* then. In effect Tom has *changed his world.* He has made reality conform to his conception of what it should be. No longer does reality consist of life in a humdrum river town, in which he must grow up obscurely and insignificantly, being made to be good, attending church, studying tedious lessons at school. Rather, reality for Tom Sawyer has come to mean pirates, treasure, heroism and glory.

It is toward that end that the events of *Tom Sawyer* have been directed, and if one will look over the various episodes comprising the novel, he will find that nothing happens therein which does not directly or indirectly contribute toward the impact of that result. This is the form of the novel. The plot structure of the novel is directed toward that end.

So much, for the moment at least, for plot development. Plot structure

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is the framework on which words, scenes and episodes are arranged. What of those constituent parts: the style, the conversations, the description, the events? The novelist made his book out of them; they are the texture of his story, the flesh on the bones, giving the novel its content and meaning. We know the plot of the story that Mark Twain told, but how did he tell it?

First of all, the story of *Tom Sawyer* is not presented in a vacuum. It is told in a very specific place, and the place is a part of the novel. All novels take place somewhere, of course, but in this instance the *somewhere* is very important. So let us look at it. How does Mark Twain depict the scene of *Tom Sawyer's* exploits?

Notice how carefully Twain sets a scene before he allows Tom and the other characters to appear. Here is the beginning of Chapter II, the renowned fence whitewashing episode:

> Saturday morning was come, and all the summer world was bright and fresh, and brimming with life. There was a song in every heart; and if the heart was young the music issued at the lips. There was cheer in every face and a spring in every step. The locust trees were in bloom and the fragrance of the blossoms filled the air. Cardiff Hill, beyond the village and above it, was green with vegetation, and it lay just far away enough to seem a Delectable Land, dreamy, reposeful, and inviting.

It is against this backdrop that Tom Sawyer will conduct his celebrated feat of getting the board fence whitewashed by his friends and becoming rich in worldly goods in the process, in utter defiance of the customary attitudes toward fence-painting prevalent among the young of St. Petersburg. Tom is not himself conscious of the natural beauties of a summer day along the Mississippi for very long or very often, but the reader is, and for the reader Mark Twain has placed the episode in its tranquil, summery context, so that Tom's manipulations can take place in the warm light of that lovely Saturday morning, with the green, dreamy backdrop of Cardiff Hill overlooking the children's activities.

Cardiff Hill—how often do we catch sight of it in the novel. Here is another typical scene, that which opens Chapter VII and precedes Tom's courtship of Becky Thatcher:

> The harder Tom tried to fasten his mind on his book, the more his ideas wandered. So at last, with a sigh and a yawn, he gave it up. It seemed to him that the noon recess would never come. The air was utterly dead. There was not a breath stirring. It was the sleepiest of sleepy days. The drowsing murmur of the five and twenty studying scholars soothed the soul like the spell that is in the murmur of bees. Away off in the flaming sunshine, Cardiff Hill lifted its soft green sides through a shimmering veil of heat, tinted with the purple of distance; a few birds floated on lazy wing high in the air; no other living thing was visible but some cows, and they were asleep.

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There we have the same image as before: summer, somnolence, nature drowsing, for all the world as if the author had read the opening lines of *Piers Plowman,* 'In a summer's season, when soft was the sun,' and had merely substituted Cardiff for Malvern Hill. It is extraordinary how often Mark Twain does this sort of thing in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,* so we might very well pay some attention to the function of this kind of composition of place in the total effect of the story. It cannot be a mere accident that Twain has chosen to tell his story against a backdrop of nature, and has interspersed in his narrative so much gentle but persistent scene setting and good-natured humor.

Before we examine this any further, however, we should consider the other part of the picture, too: the human action and events that take place against the background. Here we get something quite different. There is a great deal of action throughout the book, and a great deal of dialogue. These contrast directly with the background. Take for example the scene in Chapter X, after Injun Joe and Muff Potter have attacked and killed the doctor in the previous chapter, while Tom and Huck watched aghast. The two boys raced back toward town, and finally fell panting inside the old tannery, where at last they caught their breath:

"Huckleberry, what do you reckon 'll come of this?"
"If Dr. Robinson dies, I reckon hanging 'll come of it."
"Do you though?"
"Why, I *know* it, Tom."
Tom thought awhile, then he said:
"Who'll tell? We?"
"What are you talking about? S'pose something happened and Injun Joe *didn't* hang? Why he'd kill us some time or other, just as dead sure as we're a-laying here."
"That's just what I was thinking to myself, Huck."
"If anybody tells, let Muff Potter do it, if he's fool enough. He's generally drunk enough."

The language is sharp, alive, unadorned. It is the speech of everyday life, spoken the way children would speak it. The dialogue—and Mark Twain uses it to a greater extent than almost any previous American novelist—is completely realistic. Unlike that in Longstreet's *Georgia Scenes,* there is no feeling of condescension, of strained exaggeration for humorous effect. Though the sentences are short, not complex, the language is in no sense lifeless or monotonous, either. Twain the literary artist has managed to make the dialogue both lively and appropriate. In other words, Mark Twain does not treat these young Missouri boys primarily as quaint local color types. For Twain, life in St. Petersburg is real, not merely picturesque.

So, from what we have seen so far, we might attempt to summarize the novel this way. It is an essentially realistic novel, describing the process

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by which a youngster changes the community and his life to suit his tastes. However, the realistic action is placed in a rich, timeless context in which the natural world seems to lie in the sun forever, back of the activities of the characters. The matter-of-factness of action and dialogue are thus contrasted with an underlying sense of never-never-land fable. The image of Cardiff Hill in the background, green in the sun, is of complete inaction, of timelessness. We leave *Tom Sawyer* with Tom and Huck talking of how they will eventually go off for good and be outlaws; Tom's dreaming, which has turned into the everyday plot of the novel, is once again the romance and fantasy of a child.

Thus *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is a kind of dualistic work. It is an action story, in a definite situation with a definite plot, and it is also a fable of boys in childhood. Tom is the practical young man, and he is also dreamer in the sun.

Is there any one scene that exemplifies this dual nature of the book and of its protagonist? Some lines at the outset of Chapter VIII, when Tom is rebuffed by Becky Thatcher and steals out of town to meditate, will do:

> Half an hour later he was disappearing behind the Douglas mansion on the summit of Cardiff Hill, and the schoolhouse was hardly distinguishable away off in the valley behind him. He entered a dense wood, picked his pathless way to the center of it, and sat down on a mossy spot under a spreading oak. There was not even a zephyr stirring; the dead noon-day heat had even stilled the song of the birds; nature lay in a trance that was broken by no sound but the occasional far-off hammering of a woodpecker, and this seemed to render the pervading silence and sense of loneliness the more profound. The boy's soul was steeped in melancholy; his feelings were in happy accord with his surroundings. He sat long with his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands, meditating.

It seems to me that this image is the heart of the novel, as Mark Twain wrote it. Here is Tom, reflecting upon his earthly woes, very much concerned with the situation that comprises the plot of the book, and at the same time Tom is also outside the immediate action, there in the wood near Cardiff Hill where nature lay in a trance all about him, and he is outside, too, of the community and its immediate concerns. This is the essential Tom as the author created him. Mark Twain seemed to see young people such as Tom as both caught up in the worldly time and place and events, and part too of that timeless world of sun and summer and Cardiff Hill.

Which world is real: the daily life of St. Petersburg and of Tom Sawyer, or the natural world of Cardiff Hill? Both are real, and the boy Tom is a part of both. Here in that passage Tom is aware of both worlds. An adult would not have been, could not have been. Adults in St. Petersburg are

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prosaic creatures, very much occupied with their mundane pursuits. Tom can look to no adult in the town for help in the matters which most concern him.

What Mark Twain really does in the novel is to defy adulthood, defy the world of practicality, by proving that Tom Sawyer's child's world, with its pirates, robber bands, buried treasure, and Cardiff Hill green and still in the sunlight, is valid too. In a very real sense, Tom Sawyer arrests the progression of time, holds onto childhood instead of conforming to the values and habits of adults.

Actually, however, it is only a delaying action. It is over when the novel is over, and the eventual victor is the mundane world, for Tom will of course grow up. "So endeth this chronicle," Mark Twain writes in concluding the novel; "it being strictly a history of a *boy,* it must stop here; the story could not go on much further without becoming the history of a *man.*" The ultimate triumph will be the community's, the adult's; Tom will cease retreating to the woods beyond Cardiff Hill, and cease hunting for buried treasure. Yet while the novel lasts, Tom Sawyer holds on to life on a child's terms, and forces the community to accept it.

Thus a brief thematic and textual analysis of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,* read not as a document, but as a story, in order to see what the story means. What, then, of the use of the novel as a help in understanding American life?

For such a purpose, I think that what we have found in the course of this literary analysis offers rich material. Take, for instance, the idea of success. For Tom Sawyer, life on the Mississippi has indeed been a place where all things are possible, where a man can change the world. Tom Sawyer adjusts the conditions of life to suit his tastes. He looks on the world not as a settled, fixed community, but as a place of boundless possibilities. Is not this novel a very good interpretation of a typically American attitude? Tom is not merely lucky. He *makes* his opportunities. Far more so than with the shallow, stereotyped novels of Horatio Alger, this story is an American success story. Individualism, the will to succeed, the cult of success even, are exemplified in the theme of this novel. It is built around and it explores on many planes an idea that we accept as entirely appropriate to nineteenth-century America.

Yet compare *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* to a European novel of childhood, and note the difference. When we analyze novels about young boys growing up in Germany, England, France, what do we get? *Wilhelm Meister,* with its heavy intellectual adventure toward maturity and adjustment with the world. *Tom Brown's School Days,* with all its cruelty and reforming intentions. *The Red and the Black* or *The Charterhouse of*

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Parma, with their cynical, preoccupied attitude toward achieving success in a given jaded situation, and their notion of an almost Nietzschean superman-like approach to destiny. Where in any of these novels is there room for that happy serenity of Tom Sawyer, for gazing out of the window and observing the sun and the shadows and the sleeping cattle on Cardiff Hill? In these European novels, it seems to me, there is a basic feeling of the world being what it is, and the young man's growth a process of becoming adjusted to its essential limitations. By contrast, Tom Sawyer changes his world, and that was possible because the author was able to conceive of the world as a place of boundless possibilities.

Yet as we have noted, it has been only a temporary victory that Tom has been able to achieve. He will grow up; he will have to conform; he will make his way on adult terms, in a community. The triumph has been bittersweet. Tom has gained renown and riches and romance, he has become somebody, yet he is in the process of losing as well as gaining. He is losing that moment in the woods beyond Cardiff Hill; he is steadily growing away from the world of childhood, of timeless nature and sun and green hillside, that "Delectable Land, dreamy, reposeful, and inviting." It is most reminiscent of a passage in Thomas Wolfe's *Of Time and the River,* in which the protagonist is seated at a restaurant in a French town, and hears the sound of workmen going home after the day's labor. Instantly it makes him think of another sound, "a suddenly living and intolerable memory, instant and familiar as all this life around him, of a life that he had lost, and that could never die." And Wolfe goes on to describe that memory:

> It was the life of twenty years ago in the quiet, leafy streets and little towns of lost America—of an America that had been lost beneath the savage roar of its machinery, the brutal stupefaction of its days, the huge disease of its furious, ever-quickening and incurable unrest, its flood-tide horror of gray, driven faces, starved, brutal eyes and dull, dead flesh.
>
> The memory of that lost America—the America of twenty years ago, of quiet streets, the time-enchanted spell and magic of full June, the solid, liquid, lonely shuffle of men in shirt-sleeves coming home, the leafy fragrance of the cooling turnip-greens, and screens that slammed, and sudden silence—had long since died, had been drowned beneath the brutal flood-tide, the fierce stupefaction of that roaring surge and mechanic life which had succeeded it.

Wolfe was writing of childhood in Asheville, North Carolina, while Mark Twain was describing childhood in Hannibal, Missouri, seventy years before. Yet in both passages there is what Wolfe called "the time-enchanted spell and magic of full June," and in Wolfe's first novel, *Look Homeward, Angel,* there are numerous passages that remind one of those scenes in *Tom Sawyer.*

When we think of Mark Twain, that practical man, popular lecturer, eager businessman, who chided the South for its improvident romanticism,

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and we think of his practical, eager country of booming business and material prosperity, well on its way to becoming the richest nation on earth, does not this sense of spiritual loss in the very act of practical, adult achievement seem important? In the moment of attaining success and renown, Tom Sawyer is losing contact with the natural world of Cardiff Hill. There is achievement—and there is paradoxically the denial of achievement. Just as in Robert Penn Warren's poem, "The Ballad of Billie Potts," young Billie goes west and achieves success, yet something is lost in the very act, and he must come back east to find it. As Warren described it,

Though your luck held and the market was always satisfactory,
Though the letter always came and your lovers were always true,
Though you always received the respect due to your position,
Though your hand never failed of its cunning and your glands always thoroughly knew their business,
Though your conscience was easy and you were assured of your innocence,
You became gradually aware that something was missing from the picture,
And upon closer inspection exclaimed, "Why, I'm not in it at all!"
Which was perfectly true.

We see this theme in Warren, in Wolfe, and we have found it in Mark Twain. Not the repudiation of success and practicality, but the achievement of it. Tom has succeeded. He has changed his world. He is rich, and famous, and heroic. He would not have it differently, and neither would his creator. Yet along with it there is the sense of something impractical and spiritual lost in the doing.

If this theme has any relevance for understanding American life, and of course it does, then it follows that its presence at the heart of a great nineteenth-century American novel has some significance for us. It shows us something that we did not perhaps see so well before. It is not documentation, but *analysis*. It tells us what to look for.

A great novel creates its art by synthesis, not by fragmentation. It is in the novelist's ability to fuse complex experience into a single artistic entity, to make a whole out of parts, that his art achieves its goals. It took a Mark Twain to show us how the meaning of success, and of loss, lies at the heart of American experience. To deny ourselves the insights of our major writers in our search for knowledge of our country's life, is needlessly to impoverish and weaken the quality of our understanding. Documentation can tell us *what*, but fiction tells us *why*. It may not provide us with all the facts we want about American life, but it can do something at least equally as useful. It can draw multitudinous experience together into one coherent artistic image, and tell us what American life means.

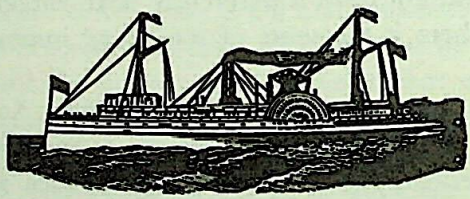
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Afternote

This essay was written before Henry Nash Smith had published his brilliant study, *Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1962), a superb demonstration of just how the work of a major writer may profitably be used to interpret a culture. I should have written the essay very differently, I believe, had I had the benefit of Smith's study.

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Frederick J. Hoffman

Philistine and Puritan in the 1920s: An Example Of The Misuse Of The American Past

LIKE many another term of our intellectual history *Puritanism* was used in a special sense in the American 20s. The historical Puritan who populated and regulated seventeenth-century New England became an unhistorical victim and villain both of popular journalism, even of the *avant-garde* version of America's culture. This was one of the more notorious examples of historical distortion practiced by what Harold Stearns called "The Young Intellectual." As in most distortions there was a dim and more than misunderstood outline of truth in the portrait—more than misunderstood because ignored, as much of American tradition was ignored in the attempt of the 1920s to justify its successful revolt against convention.

The young man who began to write during or shortly after World War I grew up to expect a strong attack upon the cultural status quo; it became fashionable for him to refer loosely to scientific studies which seemed to him to disprove convention or to make it appear ridiculous. He was inclined to make inferences from science which were either not there at all or were applicable in a very limited sense. More than that he saw no place (or very little) for what he now regarded as "orthodox" religious doctrine, or "fundamentalism." Since religion had thus gone out of fashion, he needed a scapegoat, a substantial "enemy," to whom he could attach responsibility for the absurdity of an "outmoded and impractical" morality. The name *Puritan* occurred to him happily and almost without effort. This

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much he thought he knew: the Puritan had been associated with grim, stark, colonial reality; he was a "pre-scientific" personality, a man ignorant and rudely affirmative, who forced his religion and its strait-laced moral code upon a growing country. Having been forbidden a "natural" life, he made the "artificial, repressed" one all the more effective; his energy was directed fanatically toward a single, limited purpose. As the country prospered, he regarded the increase of material goods as a sign of the rightness of his purpose and the efficiency of his means.

In a *New Republic* essay (December 1, 1920) Charles Beard discussed the great variety of distortions which had been visited upon the term *Puritanism* as a result of the anti-Puritan crusade. Once the term had had a fairly definite meaning, he said, but now it has lost any sharpness of definition. "By the critics it is used as a term of opprobrium applicable to anything that interferes with the new freedom, free verse, psycho-analysis, or even the double entendre." The Puritan's historical importance has been exaggerated, Beard maintained; and as a present device for blaming all interferences with absolute liberty upon a symbolic scapegoat, he is now so vague in outline as to make him all but unrecognizable. Beard listed the various pro-and-con meanings of Puritanism; and among the designations provided by the anti-Puritans he noted such unpleasant attributes as "sour-faced fanaticism, supreme hyprocrisy, intellectual tyranny, brutal intolerance, religious persecution, sullenness, stinginess, conceit, and bombast."

What Beard pointed out in 1920 was a gross misappropriation of historical truth. The seventeenth-century Puritan described in documents and scholarly biography "sinned" chiefly in being an earnest and self-committed doctrinaire. The principal reason for his being so greatly misunderstood was the wide range of cultural difference between his century and ours. That he regulated social behavior and interfered with the private lives of his fellows is undeniably true. It is also true that he seemed unjust to some of his contemporaries and ridiculous to others. But the striking feature of his life was his sense of "theological responsibility," his awareness of a superintending and implacable God, whose control over the American conscience had diminished considerably by the end of the nineteenth century. The young men of the early twentieth century were able to appreciate

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this God scarcely at all. Their conception of the historical Puritan (if they possessed any) was of a man who had behaved obnoxiously without cause and who had served not God but himself. It was impossible for them to distinguish between the social judgment of Samuel Sewall and that of John Sumner. Where there was some knowledge of past Puritan history (as in the case of H. L. Mencken), that knowledge was obscured by a polemical devotion to more recent philosophies of history and society.

Several suggestions awaited the young intellectual for completing his false analysis of the moral and cultural ills of his country. Of these the new Freudian psychology and the slightly older Nietzschean philosophy were most readily at hand: Freud had been introduced to America early enough in the century to warrant considerable misuse by 1920; Nietzsche's attack upon democratic middle-class European society had been given an American revision of emphasis and application by H. L. Mencken in 1908. Though these two men were scarcely responsible entirely for the Puritan-baiting of the 1920s, their statements—revised, maneuvered, and distorted as they were—formed a substantial portion of the background of it.

I

The principal contribution made by Freud to the terminology of anti-Puritanism was the term *repression*. For the young men and women of the period the word served as a convenient label for all their grievances against society. It was their feeling that the absurd, exorbitant moral demands which society had made upon its victims had culminated in a national neurosis. Repression became the American illness. With little or no thought of personal responsibility—that is, the ever-present conflict between ego and id which Freud insists antedates any precise formulation of conventions—they decided that any force was evil which stood in the way of a full, wholesome, primitive expression of natural impulses. This is the feeling underlying the native primitivism of Sherwood Anderson's fiction. Repression stands for all the social formulas which have prevented the natural expression of "life impulses." The sexual revolution which began with the reading of Ellis, Key, Carpenter, and others was provided with a slogan: "Down with Repression!"

The idea of repression was soon enough applied in the popular

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mind to American history and sociology. If repression was a national illness, then all the social and moral forces which had led to the neurosis of an entire people must have had this object, to repress the natural life of a people, to shut off the natural satisfaction of healthy desires as the price paid for achieving economic and industrial success. The Puritan pioneer had stood in the corridors of heaven, hat in hand, unsmiling and ungracious, waiting his turn for reward of his unrelenting pursuit of the moral ideal. A people so earnestly engaged in Puritan good works had not learned how to laugh, how to live graciously; they had invented words and phrases designed at every turn to avoid mention of any natural act; they had made courtship and marriage polite but arduous formalities, had taken from them every last joy and pleasure. This was the verdict of many Americans of the 20s, who interpreted their past history as part of a national malaise, resulting from continuous distortion of native impulse.

The pioneer, said Waldo Frank, served his utilitarian ends by a continuous suppression of desire. He had to "do violence upon himself. Whole departments of his psychic life must be repressed. Categories of desire must be inhibited." Pleasure was the natural enemy, the thief of time. But desire could not be thwarted; it was to express itself, despite the monomania of repression: "It sickened and shriveled and grew perverse. It sought expression in neurotic arts, in obversely sensual religions, in sadistic interference with Desire in others." With each new generation it asserted itself anew, until the weight of repressive forces pushed it back once again—"the accumulated might of environment and 'education' turned it aside." Ultimately this successive enactment of public denial was to cause a chaotic breakdown in national morality—an open hypocrisy, the "hypocrisy of the American who goes to church on Sunday and bleeds his brother Monday, who leads a sexually vicious life and insists on 'pure' books, draped statues and streets cleared of prostitutes, who preaches liberty and democracy and free-speech, and supports the subtlest Oligarchy of modern times."[1]

Such books as Frank's *Our America* and Harvey O'Higgins' *The American Mind in Action* often read like lengthy case histories of the Puritan as the archetype of all neurotics. O'Higgins accused the Puritan of having continuously repressed "the most potent instincts of

[1] Waldo Frank, *Our America* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919) 19, 45–46, 75.

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ordinary healthy life," the sex instinct principally of course. "The instincts were not merely to be prevented from impelling to sinful action; they were to be stopped from getting into the conscious mind, as sinful thoughts; they were to be dammed up in the subconscious mind, with all their undrained energy and all their unrelieved tension."

The American Mind in Action is a study of several American figures, and in each case the effect of the national repression is demonstrated. Mark Twain, for example, had suffered from a repressed hatred of his mother and of the awful biblical God whom she had used to thwart his desires. His humor, and all American humor, "is an outlet for repressed emotions in disguise." Both *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer* are disguised expressions of filial impiety, and "the typical American" reads them because he too "retains in his subconscious mind a dynamic, repressed, and undrained emotion of filial revolt, caused by his hatred of the Calvinistic Puritanism of his parents."[2]

Criticism of "our Puritan society" assumed many forms, but the great majority of it insisted on a clear-cut division between natural desires and the social forces which acted on every hand to frustrate them. The baiters of Puritanism in the 1920s protested against the institutions which had codified morality and regulated conduct and accused them of having been responsible for repression. In this fashion social critics in some degree excused the individual from the responsibility of control by demonstrating that the existing agencies of control were interfering with the natural development of human life. In so doing they were forced to exaggerate and distort their description of these agencies, to offer a caricature of the American Puritan as an unholy agent of repression, and to blame him for the sad state of cultural frustration from which they believed the country as a whole was suffering.

The attack upon society as an agent of repression was most vigorous in the matter of the country's sexual morality. The Puritan was often pictured as a stern, austere figure whose body was so carefully guarded against exposure that it is difficult to imagine by what means he succeeded in reproducing his kind. The proper reaction to

[2] Harvey O'Higgins and Edward H. Reede, M.D., *The American Mind in Action* (New York: Harper, 1920) 33, 34.

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him, of course, was to defy his code, to act in deliberate scorn of it, and to experiment as much as possible with sexual manners prohibited by it. In some cases this defiance of Puritan morality acquired the characteristics of a primitivism, an attempt to point out the great happiness of people who were not brought up in terror of sex and who therefore lived a normal, happy, casual life. The "paleface" attitude, as Wyndham Lewis called it, expressed itself in such novels as Sherwood Anderson's *Dark Laughter* and Waldo Frank's *Holiday*. In the former the Negro servants are a chorus laughing its disapproval of the conventional stupidities of their masters; in the latter the Negroes and white men live in adjoining parts of a city which is owned and dominated by the whites but in which only the Negroes seem happy. "White folks wanting, white folks shutting down, white world hungering and a cold hard hate, a hating poison from its hungering love."[3]

In other examples of the literature of the 20s the white folks don't stay in their town, wanting and hating, but flee to the city, where life is easier and it is more difficult for the code to work successfully. We find many of them making the pilgrimage to Greenwich Village, "looking for the realization of some vague ideal of adventure, of beauty, of joy, of freedom." The harsh repression of natural wishes often issues in violence, in which the all but inarticulate person becomes briefly, violently articulate and repressions are thrown off with an almost insane abandon. The little people, for example, who inhabit Anderson's midwestern villages often live dull, inhibited lives; then with emotional violence they free themselves of their burden of repression. In Anderson's stories there is often an occasion for walking away from the responsibilities of the code—as happens in the case of John Webster of *Many Marriages*, who finds his position as a midwestern manufacturer intolerable and who abandons his office and his family in consequence.

In these suggestions one can discover the American attitude toward repression and its relationship to the theories of progress which were the principal objects of attack. Freud's explanation of the psychic mechanism of repression was a convenient device, a label, an easy means of organizing cultural protest about a central concept. The opposite of Puritanism was not only anti-Puritanism but sen-

[3] Waldo Frank, *Holiday* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1923) 29.

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suality, experiment in sexual matters, and tolerance of all oddities of sexual behavior.

II

Most literary portraits of the middle class were drawn by disinherited sons and daughters from that class. The intelligentsia of the 1920s for the most part belonged economically to the middle class; culturally they took pride in repudiating that class. Their criticism of the bourgeoisie was an all-out attack upon the customs and manners, the native cultural disposition of that class. Proletarian criticism of the middle class was based entirely upon the premise of economic injustice; the reaction of the intelligentsia was shaped in terms of its view of the ideal in taste and morality. The vigor of antibourgeois criticism in the 1920s came, not from the proletarian critics, but from the middle-class men and women who were disgusted with their cultural heritage and viewed the guardians of middle-class morality and culture as hopelessly stupid and comical parodies of human nature. For the most part this reaction was not economic or political in its nature; it was cultural and moral. The burghers offended in a thousand ways and made countless errors of taste.

What distressed their critics more than anything else was the religious intensity with which they had exploited what had originally been chiefly an economic convenience. The bourgeoisie were condemned, not so often for having made money, but for having turned the making of it into a religion and a morality. Out of this concept of the conventional man grew the portrait of conventional virtues. The cardinal virtues ascribed to the class were dullness, stupidity, aggressiveness in commerce, conformity to the remnants of traditional morality, and a moral opportunism, linked with certain blind convictions about the economic status quo. What the reaction to middle-class life added up to was the feeling that money was not an adequate determinant of other values, that money was a value of a kind so totally different from these others that it was bound to kill them or distort them beyond recognition. Convention corrupts taste; and absolute adherence to convention corrupts absolutely.

This criticism of the middle class is almost wholly an urban thing; the critics were augmented from time to time by numbers of refugees from the Midwest. And, though they scattered in that decade to

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various parts of the world, they seemed agreed about the broad outlines of their attack. These outlines, whether they were presented in caricature or satire or polemic, were unified under the characterizations of two terms, each of them applicable to its separate sphere of interest: the cultural bourgeoisie were termed Philistine, the moral were dubbed Puritan. In each of these divisions the predominating motif was not so much the consequences of their actions as the *manner* in which they acted. Thus the errors of narrowness and stupidity were condemned in the Puritan; he was a moral Philistine whose sins of taste were the product of his cultural helplessness, his almost regular refusal to consider the arts as having values independent of the moral setting in which they were considered.

During the 20s attacks upon the ramparts of Philistia differed widely in detail but almost never in general strategy. To the intellectuals of the decade the Philistine appeared to be searching constantly and nervously for a "respectable" culture, for a culture of outward form, which would soften the harsh outlines of bourgeois economic primitivism. In some instances the notion of respectability served cleverly to conceal an inner emptiness; the "Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls" of Cummings' poem, for example, "are unbeautiful and have comfortable minds"; their vision is cut off entirely from a life not prescribed by their conventions:

> While permanent faces coyly bandy
> scandal of Mrs. N and Professor D
> . . . the Cambridge ladies do not care, above
> Cambridge if sometimes in its box of
> sky lavender and cornerless, the
> moon rattles like a fragment of angry candy[4]

The suburban mind, in similar fashion, wears a protective coloration. "In the suburbs," wrote Maxwell Bodenheim, "life wards off the partial reproaches of Nature with hosts of moral and material activities, and preserves the weakened connection with the heart of the city, and dodges into the city now and then for a relieving evening's spree."[5] Culture for these people is something one has

[4] Poem 28 from *Tulips and Chimneys* (New York: Seltzer, 1923). Copyright 1923 by E. E. Cummings.

[5] Maxwell Bodenheim, "The Suburban Mind," *Chicago Literary Times*, June 1, 1924, p. 13.

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acquired as an additional display, a possession one boasts of because of the class distinction it demonstrates. "The whole atmosphere of the concert hall," said the *New Republic*, "is heavy with the miasma of community coercion." [6]

The culture of the Philistine was portrayed as a patchwork quilt of easy knowledge, affectations of the graces, and utilitarian aesthetics. The easy knowledge was gained from Chautauqua meetings, from the popular debasements of the intellectual coin, from the lecture platform of women's clubs. When the middle class imitated the practice of Greenwich Village, as that place had been described to it in the *Saturday Evening Post* and the popular press, the fake freedom and strained casualness of such pseudo-Bohemian affairs impressed the intellectual as another violence done upon his sincerity and good taste. There was a certain civic pride in this matter of sinning à la Bohemia, said Marquis Childs. It is "the expression of a dim conviction that the vices of Paris, France, really haven't much on those of Paris, Illinois." This amateur "villaging" of the middle class struck Childs as being a rather pathetic demonstration of self-consciousness. "What really exists is a preoccupation with certain bright, new toys, a preoccupation for which there is available plenty of leisure and energy. This is commonly coupled with a pleasurable sense of wrongdoing, the challenging stimulation of having accepted a dare of long standing." [7]

The debasement of popular literature was likewise commented upon as a cheapening of the literary talent for purposes of entertaining the middle class, without disturbing too much its sense of comfort and security. This pressure upon the literary conscience limited the value of literature so that it became, in a society dominated by middle-class taste, merely "useful," in the sense of engaging the senses and securing the sentiment against any violation of its conventional habits. "The truth of the matter," said Lewis Mumford, "is that almost all our literature and art is produced by the public, by people, that is to say, whose education, whose mental bias, whose intellectual discipline does not differ by so much as the contents of a spelling book from the great body of readers who enjoy

[6] Editorial, vol. 42, p. 70 (April 8, 1925).

[7] Marquis Childs, "Midwestern Night's Entertainment," *American Mercury*, vol. 15, p. 174 (October 1928).

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their work."[8] They have made a literature which echoes the dullness and fails forever to break through the limitations of their own world. This narrowness of literary approach produces "best sellers" which are either escapes from bourgeois routine or pathetic and detailed portraits of it; in neither case is the literature illuminated or relieved by any imaginative transcendence of the environment in which it is written.

The diversions offered the shopgirl and the clerk were a composite of lurid sensationalism and the inept, pious platitude which kept actual immorality conveniently beyond reach. The sensation seekers had little trouble finding an ample supply of printed thrills; the tabloid newspaper, the cheap magazine, the motion picture provided a capsule form of immorality, to be taken as often as required but always with a Christian, bourgeois antidote. The lower classes might enjoy the vicarious sensation of murder, rape, and kidnaping, in much the same way as the middle classes enjoyed the sensation of art. Thus was the Christian morality of intention, so strongly ridiculed by Nietzsche, securely circumvented.

The unfortunate few who, like Leopold and Loeb, had translated intention into action provided both the spectacle and the lesson for the others. The Leopold and Loeb trial, one of several lurid spectacles for the tabloid-hungry public, was a constant source of thrills; Leopold and Loeb had themselves acted in an effort to demonstrate violently their boredom with bourgeois life and in doing so had provided millions of their compatriots with an easy and safe diversion. "Both were romantically bored by their luxurious bourgeois life," said Robert Morss Lovett, commenting upon the trial, "and they recognized in crime the most powerful means of escape, of setting the individual free from social bonds, of putting him *jenseits von Gut und Böse*."[9]

Along with the devastating attack upon the tastes and manners of the Philistine went the criticism of his moral brother, the Puritan. It was the Puritan who provided religious protection against violations of the code, who determined the limits of middle-class behavior and who with a clumsy hand censored the literature it enjoyed and

[8] Lewis Mumford, "Ex Libris," *Freeman*, vol. 7, p. 143 (April 18, 1923).
[9] Robert Morss Lovett, "Crime and Publicity," *New Republic*, vol. 39, p. 122 (June 25, 1924).

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set the limits of respectability in the arts. Efforts to define and describe Puritanism took up a considerable portion of the time and energy of the intellectual of the period. In April 1917 Randolph Bourne had written his famous essay on "The Puritan's Will to Power" for Oppenheim's and Frank's *Seven Arts* magazine. H. L. Mencken's description of the Puritan influence on American literature was published also in 1917 in *A Book of Prefaces*. These two essays established the tone of anti-Puritanism for the 1920s.

The Puritan loves virtue, said Bourne, not for its own sake but for the power his affectation of it will give him. He is passionately in favor of moral righteousness, but this point of view is actually a matter of power strategy, "an instrument of his terrorism."[10] Mencken discussed the "almost unbearable burden" which the Puritan's "unbreakable belief in his own bleak and narrow views" and his "lust for relentless and barbarous persecution" had put upon the intellectual life in America. That the Puritan forces were strong, Mencken was forced to admit; he described them as in ceaseless and bitter struggle "against the rise of that dionysian spirit, that joyful acquiescence in life, that philosophy of the *Ja-sager*, which offers to Puritanism as in times past, its chief and perhaps only antagonism."[11] The Puritan had scored one conspicuous victory in the 1920s, that historical example of virtuous triumph over reality, Prohibition. One other victory it was proud to announce, but it could scarcely claim absolute success in its struggle for it—the censorship of entertainment, the decade-long struggle by Watch-and-Warders all over the nation to "keep it clean," which forced Hollywood, in self-defense, to set up a czar of morality in the films, the Will Hays office of countercensorship.

The conspicuous victory of the Puritan over the drinking habits of a nation at large was dubbed by Herbert Hoover as "the noble experiment" in one of his numerous campaign expressions in the interests of caution and safety. That Prohibition had been a farce from the word go was the opinion of all those who attacked its effect upon the nation's manners and morals. Clarence Darrow commented several times on the futility of trying to enforce a law which was fundamentally at variance with American life and tastes. Heywood

[10] *Seven Arts*, vol. 1, p. 635.
[11] H. L. Mencken, *A Book of Prefaces* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1917) 208.

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Broun, in one of several articles on this omnipresent joke, spoke "in praise of Prohibition," maintaining that it had "furthered the amenities as well as the hazards of drinking." [12] In similar spirit one of the characters of Elmer Davis' novel, *Friends of Mr. Sweeney*, explained why "a nation starved for excitement tolerated the Volstead Act. It made any place at all that contained liquor look like a wild café." [13] Sherwood Anderson commented on the effect of bootleg liquor on American taste; the drinking of liquor of dubious origin will help the general degeneration of American taste in all other matters, Anderson maintained.[14] And E. B. White suggested that the government take over and run the speak-easies. "In that manner the citizenry would be assured liquor of a uniformly high quality, and the enormous cost of dry enforcement could be met by the profits from the sale of drinks." [15]

The reformist aspect of middle-class morality included its suppression of other freedoms as well. The bourgeois reformer was perhaps best symbolized by the spare, thin face, the white hair, the thin fingers, and the formless, ankle-length gown of the tea- and water-drinking matron of the W.C.T.U. But she was far exceeded in popularity as a subject of caricature by her male companion, the censor of middle-class entertainment. The battle over the censorship was bitter, prolonged, and enormously amusing. One of the censor's most laughable characteristics was the ineptness with which he handled the blue pencil. Because of his naivete, he forced the letter of immorality out of textbooks, while leaving the spirit in. The true censor, said Francis Hackett in 1919, is "so often not taste or conscience in any clear condition but an uninstructed agency of herd instinct, an institutional bully." The censor serves not beauty but moral "edification" and decorum. "But as an intellectual fact the use of the blue-pencil in the interests of decorum is exceedingly inept." [16] J. W. Krutch, considering the matter of decency and censorship, maintained that it was impossible "to set any legal standard of decency," simply because decency was a matter that relied upon prevailing convention, and convention is not a fixed social form. If

[12] Heywood Broun, "In Praise of Prohibition," *Vanity Fair*, vol. 31, p. 63 (October 1928).
[13] Elmer Davis, *Friends of Mr. Sweeney* (New York: R. M. McBride, 1925) 83.
[14] Sherwood Anderson, "Prohibition," *Vanity Fair*, vol. 27, p. 68 (February 1927).
[15] E. B. White, "Notes and Comments," *New Yorker*, January 1, 1927, p. 7.
[16] Francis Hackett, "The Invisible Censor," *New Republic*, vol. 21, pp. 11–13 (December 3, 1919).

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censorship would be effective, it would have to control "an emotional reaction on the part of a spectator, which, being purely subjective, is not subject to regulation." The general result of censorship is to encourage indecency rather than prevent it. "I am certain," Krutch concluded, "that the inanities blessed by Mr. Hays are more genuinely corrupting than any pornography."[17]

The battle to protect the middle class from the Anglo-Saxon four-letter word lost on all fronts. It lost ground because of its stupidity of management, because of its untimeliness, and because it offered to the reading public the dullest of all possible choices. The Puritan censor condemned all literal references to biological realities as well as every "suggestive" reference to the "baser senses." This strenuous effort to keep immorality out of sight and to shut the mind and senses to all immodesty was often diagnosed as a neurotic reaction to instincts so well repressed by the Puritan that they could reissue only in violent upheavals of insanely evangelical crusading. Puritanism, said F. B. Kaye, is a point of view based on a fundamental distrust of human nature. It is not confined to the antivice crusaders, he maintained:

> Wherever you find a mother imbued with the idea that the will of her child should be broken, there you find a Puritan. Wherever you see a legislator obsessed with the idea that the slightest relaxation in the rigidity of the laws and the heaviness of the punishments restraining action will lead to a violent anarchy, there you see a Puritan. Wherever you discover a man who despises himself because his healthy normal feelings do not measure up to the conventions he has been taught to believe in, there you have a Puritan. Distrust of normal human life does not now take the form of a belief in infant damnation; it takes the more subtle forms of rigid conventions, of a sense of sin, and of cramping legislation.[18]

The positive contribution which the middle class had made to democratic culture, according to its critics, was the religion, the morality, and the manner of modern business. Many of the intellectuals followed the example of R. H. Tawney, who in his *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* linked Puritan morality with business efficiency. There was a shift in morality and religion in the American business life which was observed by a number of these critics. This

[17] J. W. Krutch, "The Indecency of Censorship," *Nation*, vol. 124, pp. 162–63 (February 16, 1927).

[18] F. B. Kaye, "Puritanism, Literature, and War," *New Republic*, vol. 25, p. 65 (December 15, 1920).

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shift was noted in what was perhaps its most extreme form by the advertisement discussed in an article by Gilbert Seldes. It had promised "Salvation and five percent," and proposed the construction of a mammoth skyscraper on the corner of 173rd Street and Broadway in Manhattan, dedicated to Christianity and business good will.

> The significant thing about the advertisement is that it is not offensive. "Salvation and 5 percent" is brash, but not hypocritical. "Business and Christianity will be housed under one roof" is, after all, a statement of fact; and the investment in your fellow man's salvation is preceded by the promise of 5 percent. . . .
>
> The 5 percent based on ethical Christian grounds implies a great deal; above all that the 5 percent will be earned in such a way that there will be no conflict with the ethics of Christianity.[19]

The advertisement thus put into bold relief the actual relationship of Christianity to business and was therefore refreshing as a frank announcement of the final safe incorporation of security in this world with happiness in the next.

The marriage of business and religion was celebrated in various ways. The bank was of course the actual temple of modern business; its exterior and interior architecture conveyed a more intimate and a closer relationship of modern man with the rituals of religion than did the churches themselves. There was certainly a more sincere following of the ritual—it was less remote from everyone's interests—than could be found in the patently artificial following of Sunday's creed in Sunday's church. The full cycle of religious rite was followed in the business world, in the opinion of Virgil Jordan, who offered this interpretation of the Ford-Babson-Coolidge trinity:

> In their temple of Venus, the devotees of the rainfall and the crop-cycle reenact the mystery of the reproduction of the seven-year boom. In the catacombs of Wall Street, followers of the one true Chart kneel about mystic circles and crosses; and in the colosseums of collegiate "economic services," primitive statisticians are being led to the lions. From the tops of skyscrapers the mathematical *muezzins* watch industrial productivity wax and wane, and summon the faithful to sell short. The mendicant friars of Fra Roger preach the new gospel on the highways and by-ways among the Kiwanis and the Rotarians.

All that we need now, concluded Jordan, is a Cathedral of Saint Index, "with stained-glass windows bearing graphs of money-rates,

[19] Gilbert Seldes, "Salvation and Five Percent." *New Republic*, vol. 44, p. 70 (September 9, 1925).

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volume of production, wages, and the cost of living."[20] We already have our demonology in the anti-Bolshevist code and our ancestor worship in the respect for the names, deeds, and philanthropies of the robber barons of old.

This linking of religion with business represents a rather important and serious transference of loyalties, from the simple, life-denying, charitable acts of the medieval saint to the aggressive counterimages of the modern salesman, banker, and economist. The new religion used the Christian text for the most part as window dressing, and with condescension masquerading as piety presented the celebrities of biblical history with honorary membership in the new religious fraternity. The new biblical exegesis was Bruce Barton's *The Man Nobody Knows,* published in 1924 when the faith was making new records in direct and satisfying rewards for shrewd works. The "real Jesus" whom Mr. Barton purports to have uncovered from the biblical text had proved his skill as a business organizer by having brought twelve obscure men from their inefficient past and "welded them" into the greatest organization of all time. Jesus had known and followed "every one of the principles of modern salesmanship," Barton averred. The parables were among the most powerful advertisements of all time. And as for Jesus' having been the founder of modern business, Barton pointed simply to the words of the master himself: "Wist ye not that I must be about my father's *business*?"[21]

Never in our history was the power of the middle class so strongly intrenched; never did its rituals seem so convincing; and never were its heretics, the antibourgeois intellectuals, so loud in disclaiming its virtues. The portrait of the middle-class man, in the dark gray of his moral, business suit, humbly worshipping the golden calf, gave the impression of having come from the most improbable of fantasies. Money is the symbol of value, said Richard Roberts in discussing two books by priests of the new religion, "and value is created by the expenditure of the priceless stuff of life. A coin is so much minted life, a holy thing, neither common nor unclean; a sacramental thing like the bread and wine of the Communion, the symbol of life fruitfully expended. That is why the banker should

[20] Virgil Jordan, "The Business Psychle," *Freeman,* vol. 8, pp. 298–99 (December 5, 1923).
[21] Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1924) 162.

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be as a priest, and a bank a holy place." Merchandise is "so much congealed life," continued Roberts, and anyone involved in a crooked trade is therefore "defiling the Temple no less than the hucksters and money changers in Jerusalem long ago." [22] And in philosophic terms, Harold Loeb spoke of "the mysticism of money" which is replacing the theology of the past. It may prove to be "like the Christian religion in the early centuries, a revitalizing force to most aesthetic expressions." [23]

What pained most antibourgeois writers was not the apparent economic efficiency of the middle class, but its arrogance in assuming that economic success gave it cultural privilege and moral immunity from criticism. It was this smugness, this complete and self-contained satisfaction, which Mencken underscored in his "Americana" and which Sinclair Lewis pointed out in his middle-class extravaganza, *The Man Who Knew Coolidge*. The great, complacent, practical man of Mencken's "Americana," for example, is sure of himself, and he laughs at the feeble efforts to find chinks in the armor of his self-confidence. On Park Avenue lived his successful brother of the faith. "Here the American dollar reaches its dizziest point," said Stuart Chase in one of his portraits of the false economic man. "To the towering and relentless rectangles of the street, the richest nation which the world has ever seen consecrates its cash balance, develops its personality in ten easy lessons, reads the confessions of those who have climbed to the stars from one suspender, improves its table manners, consolidates button factories, makes the sign of the cross with Mr. Bruce Barton, buys for a raise, and dedicates its life." [24]

These were the terms of the middle-class comedy of manners which enjoyed a continuous run, with numerous revisions of script, on the stage of the day. The role of Nietzsche in this criticism was that of one of the men who had established precedents for it; and his contribution was presented chiefly in the writings of Mencken. The influence of Nietzsche upon the revolt against bourgeois custom — like that of Freud upon the moral revolution — was that of

[22] Richard Roberts, "The Business of Religion," *Nation*, vol. 112, p. 170 (February 16, 1921).

[23] H.[arold] L.[oeb], "The Mysticism of Money," *Broom*, September 1922, p. 129.

[24] Stuart Chase, "Park Avenue," *New Republic*, vol. 51, p. 11 (May 25, 1927).

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a man who agreed in general principle but whose words were lost in the details of the revolt itself.

It was convenient for the critic to call Puritan those aspects of middle-class behavior of which he disapproved. There was little or no question of historical accuracy or continuity. Though there was evidence enough that the scholars in the universities were exploring, describing, and defining Puritanism, sometimes strenuously defending it or making a strong effort to present it favorably, it is extremely doubtful that any of the critics cited in this paper ever saw or even knew of the existence of this impressive body of scholarship.[25]

The truth is that the young men and women of the 1920s had availed themselves of an opportunity, had found a convenient "enemy," and from that time forward had bothered little or not at all to consider the abuses they were guilty of in exploiting him. To this exploitation of a historical figure but dimly seen, they applied a variety of terms (of abuse and for purposes of diagnosis) borrowed from a number of current, popular (or popularized) philosophies and psychologies. The Freudian description of *repression* provided a spurious scientific "authority" for cultural analysis. As for Nietzsche, his contribution consisted in his having provided an outline of anti-democratic criticism, for the documenting of which the writers of the 20s provided an abundance of detail. The equalizer and leveler of democratic politics, the timid, weak "good man" of democratic ethics, the weakening effect of humanitarianism and philanthropy —all these facts of bourgeois life were disapproved and satirized in a thousand ways.

[25] The title that comes immediately to mind is Kenneth Murdock's biography, *Increase Mather* (1925), a book that established the pattern of much scholarly work on seventeenth-century New England during the decade. Murdock's "The Puritan Tradition in American Literature" appeared in *The Reinterpretation of American Literature*, edited by Norman Foerster (1928). Other titles include Robert M. Lawrence's *New England Colonial Life* (1927), Ralph P. and Louise Boas, *Cotton Mather: Keeper of the Puritan Conscience* (1928), and George L. Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (1929). A convenient survey of scholarship in the field is given in Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson (eds.), *The Puritans* (1938) pp. 785–834.

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Afternote

This essay, with some changes, was published as part of Chapter 7 of *The Twenties* (New York, Viking Press, 1955), pp. 314–27 and revised edition (New York: Collier Books, 1962).

The late Frederick J. Hoffman was Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. [This article appeared in Vol. I, No. 3, (Fall, 1949).]

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A Theme: Innocence, Adolescence, Experience



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Ihab H. Hassan

The Idea of Adolescence in American Fiction

HALF A CENTURY AGO, we used to say in America that the great and abiding theme of our literature was the theme of Innocence. Today, after fifty full years of strange history, we find it easier to claim that America has at last come of age, that it has, in fact, reached an end to innocence, and that its writers have plainly risen to the assumptions of a world literature. It would seem that the song of innocence has finally given way to the burden of experience. One of the consequences of this transition from innocence to experience is the cult of adolescence in modern literature. The cult is also an idea of our past, a mode of our moral life and a metaphor of our imagination.

Certainly no one can fail to notice the sheer physical presence of the adolescent in our world, or fail to meet some of the current problems he has generated, problems that are not solely the concern of college presidents or wardens of reformatories. Nor can we fail to recognize in the sad and angry youths who populate American fiction a striking literary manifestation rife with extra-literary import. We need go only as far back as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The Red Badge of Courage* and *Daisy Miller* to find, significantly in the post-Civil War years, the first full images of American adolescence in the novel. The image already qualified the traditional view of American innocence. But in the works of Twain and Crane, at least, the emphasis remained on the viable possibility of initiation to an adult world. With Henry James the emphasis began to change; in Daisy Miller's refusal of compromise, the dilemma of later adolescents was prefigured. The rich literature which followed the First World War revealed a more complex image of youth, an image quite frequently of disenchantment, or failure, or of violent experience. It was not

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always a hopeful view of adolescent initiation, and, despite its undeniable energy, it sought to understand the past rather than reach into the future. One thinks first of Gertrude Stein's Melanctha, who appeared in *Three Lives* as early as 1909; then of Tarkington's Willie Baxter, *Seventeen* (1916); Sherwood Anderson's George Willard, Elmer Cowley, Seth Richmond, etc., *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919); Scott Fitzgerald's Amory Blaine, *This Side of Paradise* (1920); Hemingway's Nick Adams, *In Our Time* (1926); Thomas Wolfe's Eugene Gant, *Look Homeward Angel* (1929); James Farrell's Studs Lonigan, in the trilogy by that name (1932); Faulkner's Quentin Compson, Ike McCaslin and Charles Mallison, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *The Bear* (1942) and *Intruder in the Dust* (1948); and Steinbeck's Cal or Aron, *East of Eden* (1952). After the Second World War the image of adolescence persisted, often assuming a nostalgic or whimsical or frankly regressive character. It became much less a view of the half-tragic process of initiation, as Anderson called it, than a protest against the cruelty and disorder of the world. It celebrated the lonely, the freakish, the simple and delicate children of earth. The vigor of innocence, which could be observed in Huck Finn or Henry Fleming, and the existential courage of Nick Adams or the moral passion of Ike McCaslin, were modified into something more private and vulnerable, something to which we respond with pathos rather than a full tragic sense. But at their best, the new writers showed a kind of personal intensity, a sense for the lovable, the squalid and the absurd where innocence was concerned, which we are inclined to deprecate. In Jean Stafford's *Boston Adventure* and *The Mountain Lion;* Carson McCullers' *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding;* Truman Capote's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* and *The Grass Harp;* and J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Nine Stories,* the image of adolescence throws a new light on that perennial conflict between the self and the world to which Freud assigned a decisive role in any culture.

Obviously, then, the cult of adolescence is not an accident of our time. Quite to the contrary, its history reverts to some of the most basic impulses in American experience. Behind it lies what we used to call the American Dream, the vision of youth, hope and the open road. It is, of course, a vision that has given the American novel its distinctive force and has left on the American character an indelible impression. The changes which have overtaken this vision are clearly reflected in the mirror of adolescence. But adolescence is not only a mirror of the past. It also commands a present and future interest. Auden, in reviewing Fiedler's challenging study, *An End to Innocence,* summarizes these interests well: "hitherto, both in literature and in politics, the virtues and vices of Americans have been

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those of adolescence, but today adolescence in either is no longer tolerable; the literary gold which can be mined from boyishness has been exhausted by their predecessors and American writers must either discover more adult themes or be doomed to sterility. . . ."[1] The prediction is sufficiently severe to warrant more detailed attention to the origins of adolescence, the factors which may have affected its development and the meanings it has come to assume in our culture.

The questions are admittedly speculative. Yet it is only reasonable to expect that the character of the adolescent himself should yield the first clue. His age, above all, is a transitional phase; it leads him from the fast world of childhood to the responsibilities of adulthood. One hardly needs to be as expert as Gesell is on the subject to realize that adolescence is a process more than a state. Rejection and affirmation, revolt and conformity, recklessness and sensitivity, are all parts of that abrasive process which parents have learned to consider with pique or tolerance. The process is obviously one of initiation, of recognition, adjustment, renunciation. It requires agile experiments with new roles, a search for balance and an effort of reconception on the part of the adolescent. And it is attended throughout by passionate ambivalences. Caught as he is between two worlds, the adolescent engages in a dialectic to reconcile both worlds to his own. He knows the urgency of instincts and requires the most exacting morality; he partakes of the past and looks to the future; he insists on freedom and seeks authority. His deepest allegiances are torn between the looming figures of Father and Mother. He appears, in fact, at once innocent and guilty, hopeful and disillusioned, Arcadian and Utopian, empirical and idealistic.[2]

In the American past, these very ambivalences of innocence, hope and authority have been often recognized in a wider cultural setting. They have been found to possess social and intellectual reference, to be part of American reality and to change as our national life has changed. So plausible is the correspondence between the process of adolescence and that of American culture that a latter-day Haeckel might be tempted to say that the one recapitulates the other. For us no such assertion is necessary, even though Freud did lend to Haeckel's principle additional credence.[3]

[1] W. H. Auden, "Authority in America," *The Griffin*, March, 1955, p. 10.

[2] A full treatment of adolescent and preadolescent behavioral patterns, showing that the latter imperceptibly merges into the former, may be found in William W. Wattenberg, *The Adolescent Years* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1955), pp. 61-101. See also Arnold Gesell, Frances L. Ilg, and Louise B. Ames, *Youth: The Years from Ten to Sixteen* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956), pp. 16-25.

[3] "When . . . we compare the cultural process in humanity with the process of development or upbringing in an individual human being, we shall conclude without much hesitation that the two are very similar in nature. . . ." Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 133.

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It is enough to remember that literature is the quick, full response to reality; that literature is also a *formal* response, and that it discovers the modes which make reality available. The idea of adolescence in literature is one of these modes. It is both form and vision, a complex symbol of the felt contradictions which history imposed on the American tradition of innocence. And its birth coincides with the first perception of these contradictions, the first intimations that the American Dream had to be modified if it were to remain viable, the first acknowledgment of guilt.[4] It was after the Civil War, which so rudely violated the faith of a pristine nation, as Howells, Whitman and Adams were all to testify, that the implicit dialectic of innocence and experience in American life became conscious and explicit. But the components of that dialectic deserve to be recalled separately.

Few historians would deny that the sanguine impulse was once dominant in America. From the sermons of Jonathan Edwards to those of the Luce Publications, the pursuit of happiness, as Howard Mumford Jones has shown, remained a tenacious motive.[5] Today Hollywood, like Madison Avenue, still proclaims in fatuous perpetuity that Americans are a "happy-ending" people. Yet the pursuit of happiness is only one sanguine impulse among many. We are also supremely conscious of youth, and have developed our consciousness of it into a strict ceremonial of which the mandarins are our swaddled infants. Next to failure, age has come to be considered the most reprehensible condition in our society. That the cult of youth should extend its influence to our artistic forms was to be expected. Van Wyck Brooks once defended American literature against the charge that it was a literature of boys.[6] But recognizing its energy, he also questioned the adolescent intentions of so much that was vital in it; and he deplored the fact that vitality in our past was often rudderless, that our civilization, like our literature, was always beginning anew, always arrested at adolescence. It is also probable that the brief character of our history and the unhistorical character of our private lives are partly responsible for our interest in adolescence. "In general, our writers have no history, no developments," Fiedler notes; "their themes belong to a pre-adult world, and the experience of growing old tends to remain for them intractable."[7] But more relevant than the brevity of our history is the former nature of our optimism: the

[4]For an interesting discussion of the ambivalences in the American Dream, on which, as I argue, the idea of adolescence partially rests, see Frederick I. Carpenter, *American Literature and the Dream* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955).

[5]Howard Mumford Jones, *The Pursuit of Happiness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953).

[6]Van Wyck Brooks, *The Writer in America* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1953), p. 64.

[7]Leslie Fiedler, *An End to Innocence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 193.

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way we entertained the future and envisaged the unknown. Despite the Puritan inheritance, which came to be thought of as the skeleton in the closet, ours was that doctrine of salvation through progress which Santayana considered the mainstay of moral optimism.[8] When Tocqueville visited the United States in 1831, he observed that people seemed to "care but little for what has been, but they are haunted by visions of what will be; in this direction their unbounded imagination grows and dilates beyond all measure."[9] Half a century later William Dean Howells was to enjoin our novelists to concern themselves with "the more smiling aspects" of life as being "the more American" and Whitman was to proclaim, in *Democratic Vistas,* "For our New World I consider far less important for what it has done, or what it is, than for results to come." Later still, from the depths of the twentieth century, Scott Fitzgerald could find a way to celebrate America as a "willingness of the heart." Promise, possibility, adventure—in these counters of our past, adolescents found a moral capital, which they, trusting to their future, liberally expended. And so did they find in the doctrine of Emersonian self-reliance the motive and courage of their initiation. "Here's for the plain old Adam, the simple genuine self against the whole world," Emerson had cried, though one may safely wager his Adam was not in the least old and quite probably prelapsarian. R. W. B. Lewis, pursuing the Emersonian theme in his recent study, *The American Adam,* notes the curious paradox that the stronger was the belief in progress the more it stimulated a belief in primitive Adamic innocence.[10] An optimism so broadly based is hard to subdue.

And yet it was inevitable in time that our optimism, like our history, our self-reliance and our naïveté, should take on a different character. (From these changing patterns, these bright and darker strands, the idea of adolescence is woven.) Already in the nineteenth century, President Eliot of Harvard—no great pessimist—saw fit to alter the inscription on a philosophy building from "Man is the measure of all things" to "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?"[11] With the twentieth century a further reversal of earlier trends began to set in. In the cult of youth came to be recognized a hidden expression of guilt, a morbid fear of age, embodying elements of nostalgia and regression, and carrying in it the very seeds of death. For in times of stress guilt becomes, as Kazin put it in his essay on Fitzgerald, "the inbred weapon, the little dagger of the soul, by which

[8]George Santayana, *Character and Opinion in the United States* (New York: George Braziller, 1955), p. 116.
[9]Quoted by F. O. Matthiessen, *The Responsibilities of the Critic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 142.
[10]Richard W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 5.
[11]D. W. Brogan, *The American Character* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 79.

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we make ourselves literally in-valid when we wish to remove ourselves from an intolerable situation."[12] And as Trilling has observed, we have come to insist upon the reality of evil, and have chosen to see in it a form of *charisma* which we are anxious to claim for ourselves.[13] The contemporary image of adolescence fulfills this claim, gravid as it is not only with the innocence and sensitivity of youth but also with its power and willfulness. Faith in progress and human perfectibility was found incommensurate with modern experience; it is now supplanted by quasi-religious discoveries of original sin or metaphysical explorations of the absurd in human behavior—Kierkegaard, Tillich, Niebuhr, Buber, Maritain and the unreligious Sartre or Unamuno are all in vogue. Our eyes are not set on the New Jerusalem but on Eden. Even in our historical consciousness we are beginning to entertain the possibility of guilt. We no longer concern ourselves with the fresh start in a new continent, but, like Lewis Mumford in "The Origins of the American Mind," with the failures of the old continent carried over into the new; not with the blank and immeasurable future, but with the tragic and heavy past.[14] America without a history becomes, as in the Faulkner legend, a country laboring to expiate the sins of its forebears—no more for us the "clear conscience unsullied by the past" which an 1839 editorial of the *Democratic Review* claimed for its age, no more the visionary expansionism of William Gilpin or Whitman's cheers for Manifest Destiny.[15] Our criticisms of that age are likely to be acute. "The 'century of hope' did not understand that every enlargement of man's freedom over nature would make for both good and evil consequences," Niebuhr writes. "This was the basic miscalculation from which all miscalculations about the future were derived."[16]

In the light of our historical experience it was natural that the adolescent should exercise his appeal on our tragic imagination: in his life, as in our history, the fallacies of the new start and clean slate are exemplified, and the ambiguities of initiation are dramatically portrayed. Of these ambiguities he is more than an image; he is our own symbol. After we had exhausted the physical frontier—trekked westward in that movement to which Turner attributes so many traits of American life and back-tracked eastward to re-acquire, as Ferner Nuhn saw, form, grace and status—after this came the opening of the temporal frontier, the long expeditions into the past, the skirmishes with our pieties and conventions and the massacre of our

[12]Alfred Kazin, *The Inmost Leaf* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1955), p. 118.
[13]Lionel Trilling, *The Opposing Self* (New York: Viking Press, 1955), p. 99.
[14]Lewis Mumford, *The Golden Day* (New York: Beacon Press, 1926).
[15]See Lewis, *The American Adam*, p. 13, and Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. 38-51.
[16]Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Cause and Cure of the American Psychosis," *The American Scholar*, XXV (Winter 1955-56), 13.

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illusions.[17] What went wrong with the American Dream, we all seem to be on the verge of asking, and our novelists, perhaps looking back to their own boyhood, write as if the adolescent knew the answer. And perhaps they are right. The adolescent is no longer simple or ignorant since Innocence has come to be rejected in the favor of Experience, and the pursuit of happiness has made way for the greater elegance of damnation. Our novelists, as Philip Rahv has pointed out, once they had freed themselves from the restraints of Puritanism, set out to discover experience on various and often conflicting levels of human existence.[18] The search was intrepid though not always hopeful. And it was fully in keeping with that empiricism or pragmatism so native to the American mind, that democratic denial of consciousness and "inverted idealism," as Santayana called it, which was to be identified later as a source of our anti-intellectualism.[19] Yet it is important to remember that above and beyond our veneration of all that is practical, empirical or material we have always longed for the ideal and have often apprehended the former motives in terms of the latter.[20] To this ambivalence in the American character as to others the mirror of adolescence remained faithful: the familiar paradox of idealism and empiricism, so conspicuous in the life of adolescents from Huck Finn to Holden Caulfield, reflected a wider cultural attitude. But whichever kind of experience the novelists of the Lost Generation could possess, it was not the raw, visionary experience of the frontier. Their experience was more often both violent and introspective, and in its very passion for subjectivity it heralded the end of a simple and older individualism. As the center of energy shifted from an agrarian to an industrial society, from the American prairie to the city, the lonely independence of the former yielded to the solitary dependency of the latter. In this solitary dependency novelists since Mark Twain found still another motive for their commitment to the adolescent, whose voice was in close resonance with all that was most strident in their shared experience of American life.

The picture so far presented of American innocence and its countervailing

[17]Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1920), and Ferner Nuhn, *The Wind Blew from the East* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1942). The theories of Turner have been recently exposed to a good deal of criticism, but the American myth which his theories expressed has deeply affected both our serious and popular literature. See Smith, *Virgin Land, passim.*

[18]Philip Rahv, "The Cult of Experience in American Writing," in Morton D. Zabel (ed.), *Literary Opinion in America* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1951), p. 551.

[19]*Character and Opinion,* p. 86. See also Merle Curti, *The American Paradox* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1956, pp. 54 ff.

[20]"Somewhere in our mental constitution is the demand for life as pure spirit," Trilling noted, *The Opposing Self,* p. 90. Trilling's point is anticipated by Robert S. and Helen M. Lynd, *Middletown U. S. A.* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1929).

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tendency must necessarily appear simplified. All is not innocence before Twain, nor experience after. Our writers, as Matthiessen has noted, always "possessed a tragic sense without having been able to write full tragedy;"[21] and in the nineteenth century the deep-toned complexities, the "inner diabolism of their underconsciousness," as D. H. Lawrence referred to Hawthorne, Poe and Melville, defy nimble generalizations. These writers, we know, never succumbed to the American Dream, and hardly ever succumbed to the vision of adolescence. As Carpenter put it, "the great writers of the American Renaissance carried on a kind of imaginary debate—Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman affirming the beauty of the dream, while Hawthorne and Melville denounced its falsity. But the Civil War seemed to establish the final victory of the ideals of democracy and freedom, and to end the matter. . . . Only the rise of realism in literature and of pragmatism in philosophy emphasized that the problem still existed. . . ."[22]

We cannot be very mistaken, therefore, in saying that the idea of adolescence was itself born at that indefinite historical moment which witnessed the modification of the notion of innocence by the fact of guilt, and which occurred only after the traditional character of American ideals had been questioned and reconceived. It is perhaps not altogether a matter of accident that the cult of adolescence developed on the crest of that second cycle of American literature, beginning with Twain, which Robert Spiller defined as a result of our continental conquest, and which he characterized as one of "vast adjustment to a new set of conditions."[23]

But strong as the idea of adolescence is in the American tradition, its hold on the European mind in the last hundred and fifty years suggests a wider background of intellectual, social and historical conditions. It is necessary to take some account of these conditions since their counterpart in American society had a share in promoting adolescence and in controlling the meanings it came to assume for us. In a broad sense, Romanticism, Naturalism, Primitivism and Freudianism have all contributed to the development of what must appear a singularly contradictory idea.

The bearing of Romanticism on the idea of adolescence was, of course, the earliest and most direct. Rousseau in his *Confessions* and Goethe in *The Sorrows of Werther* began that intimate exercise in self-revelation and disenchantment which may have made it possible, a century after, for Fitzgerald, Wolfe and Salinger to strike their particular notes. The bright Romantic gifts of self-consciousness and introspection, of individual rebelliousness and heroic posturing, of innocence and disillusionment, were gladly

[21] Matthiessen, *The Responsibilities of the Critic*, p. 240.
[22] Carpenter, *American Literature and the Dream*, p. 9.
[23] Robert E. Spiller, *The Cycle of American Literature* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), p. 141.

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taken over by adolescents, in life as in letters. In the United States, however, the European strain of romantic agony was tempered by the spirit of Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman, thus becoming, if not less serviceable to the adolescent, certainly more robust and inclusive.

From Naturalism came vaguer and more somber gifts. Defined so loosely as to include works by Taine, Maupassant, Flaubert, Butler, Moore, Bennett, Hardy, Crane and Farrell, who all wrote about adolescents, Naturalism entailed no uniform quality of perception beyond that determined candor and sense of fact which served to place the adolescent in a fully specified social order, and allowed him to externalize his conflicts in the fixed terms of his situation. Some Naturalists, interested as they were in the conditioning role of society and in the biological facts of existence, found in the situation of adolescents like Studs Lonigan and Henry Fleming an exemplary subject. Others, influenced perhaps by Krutch's argument, in *The Modern Temper*, that man, faced with the destruction of his illusions and unable to retrieve his innocence, was doomed to a tragic fate, perceived in the ritual of adolescent initiation the representative dilemma of contemporary man in a scientific world.

The impact of Primitivism on adolescence was of a different nature: the candor it proposed was of the naked emotions rather than the naked fact. Under its influence, literature set itself to explore those instinctual gestures and primary sensations which adolescents favored, even before black leather jackets and tight jeans had come into vogue, or Brando and James Dean had scowled and muscled their way into our communal heart. The caged sensitivity, the lurid restraint often portrayed by these actors on the screen find a more responsible antecedent in the stoical primitivism of Hemingway's Nick Adams; and who knows but that they may ultimately derive from the frenzied paradigm of Rimbaud's own life? But more relevant than Rimbaud's brand of romantic primitivism was Bergson's subjectivist philosophy. As Justin O'Brien remarks in his thorough study, *The Novel of Adolescence in France*, the literary adherents of Bergson found adolescence to be a phase of human development in which society had not yet succeeded in separating the "real I" from its "symbolic representations."[24] To the evocation of this "real I," by the printed word, Gertrude Stein, un-Bergsonian as she was in other respects, gave her most scrupulous attention. Some years later, Sherwood Anderson was to apply his awkward intuitiveness to the same end.

The most recent intellectual influence on the idea of adolescence came from Freudianism. It was to be expected that an increased awareness of

[24] Justin O'Brien, *The Novel of Adolescence in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), p. 59.

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subconscious motives, of the power of the libido, of the conflicts between the reality and pleasure principles and of Oedipal ambivalences should focus the writer's attention on the adolescent, whose life is so clearly the historical locus of these essential forces. But even before Freud's influence had made itself felt in America, the slow and often sordid struggle toward sexual emancipation had been on its way. The struggle may have once invited Comstockery and necessitated the Mann Act; but if any credence may be given to the figures of Kinsey or the rumors of organized juvenile bacchanalia in the Middle West, a new conception, or misconception, of sexual relationships appears to have now developed in our society. It is interesting that G. Stanley Hall, the man responsible for bringing Freud to lecture in this country at Clark University, should also be the author of a large and prophetic work called *Adolescence* (1904). In the Preface to that work Hall wrote:

> Never has youth been exposed to such dangers of both perversion and arrest as in our land and day. Increasing urban life with its temptations, prematurities, sedentary occupations, and passive stimuli, . . . early emancipation and a lessening sense for both duty and discipline, the haste to know all and do all befitting man's estate before its prime, the mad rush for sudden wealth and the reckless fashions set by its gilded youth—all these lack some of the regulations they still have in older lands with more conservative traditions.[25]

Hall probably had that exaggerated sense of tradition which cultivated Americans sometimes entertained at the turn of the century. He could not then know that even more radical changes were to ensue, changes that were to involve adolescence in a crisis without wholly disrupting its moral economy as many of us are apt to believe. These changes can be conveniently regarded in relation to the family, the school and the battlefields of two wars—though there are other more general considerations which O'Brien discusses in relation to the European scene, and which are best left to his able exposition.[26]

Some thirty years ago the birth rate of Americans suffered a sharp decline, strange as the fact may seem to us in these philoprogenitive days. Divorce was, at the same time, on the upswing, and the traditional patriarchal family structure had nearly crumbled, even though it had not surrendered entirely to "momism." Children came to represent one of the sacred values in our society; with great, bated breath America could respond to a kidnapping—and not only Lindbergh's—with the feeling of a national tragedy. The feeling was not exactly new; it had its roots in our traditional indulgence toward children; and many years before Dennis the Menace made

[25] Quoted by Oscar Cargill, *Intellectual America* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1941), p. 601.
[26] *The Novel of Adolescence in France,* pp. 18-50, 102-15, 208-11.

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his appearance in our comic books, Henry James had protested against the "outrageous pertness of the American child and the meek pusillanimity" with which his elders suffered him.[27] The permissive trend in child rearing seemed here to stay. It was carried through to adolescents who in their homes considered themselves, as Riesman put it, "the privileged guests in a rather second-rate hotel, a hotel whose harassed but smiling managers they put under constant pressure for renovation."[28] Millions of Americans laughed with gleeful recognition at the adolescent antics of Shirley Temple in "Kiss and Tell," seemingly oblivious of the coy sadism which the picture exuded.

The permissive trend in the home was of course reinforced by the progressive bias at the school. Since 1900 countless works on child psychology, educational theory, juvenile criminology and the physiology of puberty had appeared. At the schools, a new emphasis was placed on freedom of expression, on creativity, on manipulative rather than mandatory instruction. The teacher became something like a camp counselor whose misfortune it was to be transplanted into a classroom. And later, as American society came to be more "other-directed," Riesman tells us, the adolescent derived his values from his multitudinous peers rather than his teachers, and from his teachers rather than his parents.[29] Adolescence finally became a *mythos,* and its archetypes were celebrated by popular song in the persons of the booted "Terror of Highway 101" or the bobby-soxer with "Lipstick and Candy and Rubber-Sole Shoes." Apparently, not only a *mythos* but a vocabulary of adolescence had developed, its scope ranging from the fatalism of be-bop, whose practitioners are cavaliers from the wrong side of the tracks, to the bittersweet idealism of Salinger's New Yorker and exurbanite slang.

The legacy of World War I had a more serious and direct bearing on literature. Many of the adolescents who reached maturity in the hallowed twenties left a permanent impression on our artistic and intellectual life. Even the less distinguished among them played an important and often tragic role in the war, their very youth calling attention to their deeds. Those who survived found in common with their seniors that the traumatic experiences of the war had not been razed by riotous living, and that it sent them back, in search of youth, innocence and the old stable values, to their own adolescence. Their story has been told many times by Malcolm Cowley, Frederick J. Hoffman, Frederick Allen and most notably by them-

[27] Logan Pearsall Smith, *Unforgotten Years* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1939), p. 118.
[28] David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 57.
[29] *Ibid.,* pp. 36-82.

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selves. To their quest of lost youth literature owes a significant autobiographical impulse. It also owes the interrupted and prolonged adolescence which O'Brien discerned in the French novel, and which we can equally discern in American fiction.[30] But the impulse was seldom nostalgic: it was too skeptical, too experimental and often too good as art for that.

No such impulse followed World War II. The nineteen twenties, into which combatants of that war were born, had no innocence or stability to compare with the childhood years of the older writers. So much can we gratefully concede to the thesis expounded by John Aldridge in *After the Lost Generation* without scorning the clear testimonial of the writers involved.[31] But the war, everyone knows, brought in an age of conformity, of containment, of security; it nurtured, we are often told, a "beat generation," a "silent generation," a "cool generation." Adolescents are still living in the huge shadow of its regimentation; after the war there was the Occupation, and after that the Korean conflict. International hostilities have not abated. The local Draft Board remains active. Nowadays, it is the tribal or ritualistic aspect of adolescence that seems everywhere preponderant. The occasional acts of adolescent rebellion, made sensational beyond any sense by our tabloid sheets, appear to us pointless and desperate precisely because society no longer tolerates the more meaningful forms of rebellion as a valid way of expression. Initiation, in its traditional sense, has become either impossible or unnecessary—impossible because we brook no compromise with eccentric types and unnecessary because we condition youth almost too painlessly and efficiently to require initiation. Protest now takes strange, nugatory or surreptitious forms. Malcolm Cowley has noted, in *The Literary Situation,* the curious vein of misogyny running through American novels about the last war.[32] He has also marked a kind of incipient homosexuality which seems to be rampant in the unpublished manuscripts of would-be novelists, for whom the central fictional situation is very often an Oedipal conflict with an over-possessive mother. Fiedler has observed similar tendencies in the Southern novel of adolescence, and has decried many of them, somewhat unreasonably, as feminizations of Faulkner.[33] The issue is one that can easily be exaggerated. Yet it is hard to overlook the connection between the absence of sexual maturity in a large part of American life and the interest which writers have exhibited in the ambiguities of adolescence. Of this we can be certain: that with the passage

[30] *The Novel of Adolescence in France,* p. 105.
[31] John W. Aldridge, *After the Lost Generation* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1951), pp. 90 ff.
[32] Malcolm Cowley, *The Literary Situation* (New York: Viking Press, 1954), pp. 26 ff, 60 ff.
[33] *An End to Innocence,* pp. 202 ff.

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of time the idea of adolescence has allied itself with new forces and has come to represent a changing pattern of values.

The writers of today are pre-eminently conscious of values. To possess themselves of these values they have been willing to retrace their steps farther back than adolescence to childhood itself. Edith Mirrielees is quite right in saying that the retreat to childhood "may be, and often is, into a world as painful as any known to today's adults, but it is nevertheless a world simplified. Its pleasures and terrors are drawn within a comprehensible dimension."[34] It is possible that contemporary experience may have proved too obdurate or desiccated for the acute and limited sensibility of our younger writers. They do not, at any rate, betray the appetite of their seniors for it. Their alleged conservatism betrays the extent to which they hold the facts of evil and disorder terrifying. The expense of initiation seems to them too large. They should like to will back simplicity and innocence, but being writers, they can only recreate these in the pre-adolescent characters of their imagination. Their retrenchment behind the privacies of autistic innocence, of which the appropriate symbol is the Chinaberry tree in Capote's *The Grass Harp*, is not a futile gesture. It seems to proclaim that in no other area of contemporary experience are the traditional values of the past, of the American Dream, immune to the abrasive forces of American actuality. But their retrenchment is not altogether an escape; it is also a judgment. And the bolder among them have made some effort to reinstate the American idea of adolescent initiation as a process leading to adult participation, leading to knowledge, sacrifice and responsibility. Of these qualities Sonia Marburg in *Boston Adventure* is a promising example. And even where initiation fails, as it does in the case of Salinger's Holden Caulfield, the occasion of failure may be discovered in a tortured awareness of reality rather than in any absence of it.

Thus the dialectic of innocence and experience in the idea of adolescence comes to a momentary pause, its future hanging on the forms of reality American writers will choose to give to their temporal experience and their timeless ideals. For whatever the American writer may nowadays choose to be, he can no longer escape being, as Fiedler said, "the recorder of the encounter of the dream of innocence and the fact of guilt, in the only part of the world where the reality of that conflict can still be recognized."[35]

[34] Edith Mirrielees, "Short Stories, 1950," *English Journal*, XL (1951), 247-54.
[35] *An End to Innocence*, p. 128.

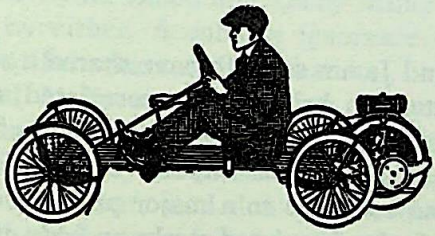
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Afternote

Much of the material in this essay is incorporated into my *Radical Innocence* (Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1961) which includes further exploration of the same and related topics.

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Annette K. Baxter

Archetypes of American Innocence: Lydia Blood and Daisy Miller

IN 1878 Howells and James seem to have shared a similar inspiration. Until then, the intention behind their completed work had been, if anything, notably dissimilar. But an examination of their momentary convergence reveals a common impulse to examine the European versus the American solutions to a major problem of social morality, from which two such closely related works as *Lady of the Aroostook* and *Daisy Miller* apparently spring.[1]

The principal characters of both novels, though not identical, are functional counterparts. Lydia's Staniford is Daisy's Winterbourne, and for purposes of "villainy," the latter's Giovanelli a somewhat glorified Hicks. Eugenio, the courier of *Daisy Miller*, finds a pale reflection in Veronica, the duenna dispatched to Trieste by Mrs. Erwin. Mrs. Miller's happy indifference to her daughter's position provides a clue to Daisy's classic nonchalance, while the South Bradfieldites' evident lack of ambition for Lydia performs something of the same rôle in explaining her.

A characteristically native flavor is felt in the kind of situations that are evoked, but more especially in the personality of the protagonists—young American girls whose every gesture lends support to Matthew Arnold's description of feminine charm in the United States: "It is the charm of a natural manner, a manner not self-con-

[1]There is no evidence in the James-Howells correspondence that they commented each other on these works at the time they were in progress.

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scious, artificial and constrained. It may not be a beautiful manner always, but it is almost always a natural manner, a free and happy manner; and this gives pleasure."

The natural manner which had so much appeal for Arnold was more than simply a source of pleasure for Howells and James. It stood for a principle not easily formulated: inviolable innocence compounded with instinctive moral judgment. That such innocence is a peculiarly American quality is suggested not only by the gross misinterpretations of Daisy by Roman society, and conversely, of Venetian society by Lydia, in the concluding episodes of *The Lady of the Aroostook*. It is suggested also by Winterbourne's "want of instinctive certitude as to how far her eccentricities were generic, national, and how far they were personal," and Staniford's remark to his friend Dunham: "This girl is plainly one of those cases of supernatural innocence, on the part of herself and her friends, which, as you suggested, wouldn't occur among any other people in the world but ours."

Perhaps because of its very indigenousness, the principle that guides the actions of both Lydia Blood and Daisy Miller is in no wise consciously invoked by either. A sublime ignorance of it, as principle, constitutes, in fact, their characteristic charm.

Both Daisy and Lydia are thrust into the unfamiliar, a milieu which differs radically from anything in their past experience. Daisy goodnaturedly seeks society when she is living in its midst: "There isn't any society; or, if there is, I don't know where it keeps itself." Lydia, on board the *Aroostook*, fails to recognize the absence of conventional society and feels no need for the kind of protection it might offer. Though the situation of *Daisy Miller* superficially turns upon the question of her social acceptance, Daisy herself is not notably agitated as to the outcome. Lydia does not directly confront the problem of crashing society, except as her success or failure with Staniford becomes that in the reader's eyes. On the *Aroostook* there is, to all appearances, no such society to crash, and she remains unconscious, until the arrival in Venice, of the conflict of background between herself and Staniford. In brief, Daisy and Lydia are never fully aware of their position as aliens before representatives of a society which, in the case of both Winterbourne and Staniford, regards itself as unmistakably superior to their own. Such unawareness constitutes one important aspect of the personality of these young women.

In contrast to this quality in Lydia and Daisy, both Staniford and Winterbourne are young men particularly sensitive to differences in social tradition. Staniford observes of Lydia: "I'm really curious to know what a girl of her tradition thinks about the world when she

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first sees it. Her mind must be in most respects an unbroken wilderness. She's had schooling, of course, and she knows her grammar and algebra; but she can't have had any cultivation. If she were of an earlier generation, one would expect to find something biblical in her; but you can't count upon a Puritanic culture now among our country folks." The opposition here is that between the city-bred sophisticate and the provincial. With Winterbourne, who initially takes a more charitable view of Daisy than Staniford does of Lydia, it is also a matter of cultivation: "She is completely uncultivated. . . . But she is wonderfully pretty and, in short, she is very nice." But when his aunt, Mrs. Costello, suggests that "She is very common," Winterbourne assents: "I see what you mean, of course." Mrs. Costello provides a clue to the nature of his dilemma: "But I really think that you had better not meddle with little American girls that are uncultivated, as you call them. You have lived too long out of the country. You will be sure to make some great mistake." The ironic implication of her argument remains: those decreed unacceptable in the cosmopolitan society of New York are equally unacceptable in Vevay, and for the same reasons—lack of familiarity with European traditions and culture. The opposition in Winterbourne's case is that between cosmopolitanism and intense Americanism.

In both cases, the quality lacking in the young women is taken to be something disturbingly intangible, something for which every evidence of physical attractiveness, personal charm, and even good taste cannot compensate. With these less elusive qualities both young women are, in fact, generously endowed. But such attributes seemingly count for very little, and their unimportance is indicated by the suggestion that they are the peculiar property of Americans. Mrs. Costello admits to Winterbourne that Daisy "has that charming look that they all have, and she dresses in perfection. . . . I can't think where they get their taste." And, earlier, Winterbourne had observed of Daisy's face that "it was not at all insipid, but it was not exactly expressive; and though it was eminently delicate, [he] mentally accused it — very forgivingly—of a want of finish." Likewise, Staniford replies to Dunham's "She's very pretty, isn't she?" in a stronger vein: "Oh, pretty enough, yes. . . . Nothing is so common as the pretty girl of our nation. Her beauty is part of the general tiresomeness of the whole situation." Thus it is made evident by both James and Howells that the pleasing exterior of their young women is taken as further confirmation of their provinciality and intense Americanism.

In addition to the possession of physical beauty, both young women are endowed with social grace. This comes as something of a surprise

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to Staniford and Winterbourne when they first consciously apprehend it. The latter accepts it as a pleasant discovery: "Winterbourne took much satisfaction in his pretty companion's distinguished air. He had been a little afraid that she would talk loud, laugh overmuch, and even, perhaps, desire to move about the boat a good deal. But he quite forgot his fears. . . ." Staniford arrives at acceptance of his knowledge by conveniently setting up categories—in this case, a distinction between social genius and sensibility. He is willing to grant Lydia full title to the former but will relent not a jot with respect to the latter. When Dunham sounds him out on the question "But how . . . do you account for her good manner?" he concedes her social genius so as to retain even firmer hold on his theory regarding her insensibility: "She probably was born with a genius for it. Some people are born with a genius for one thing, and some with a genius for another. . . . Lurella [sic] Blood has the genius of good society. Give that girl a winter among nice people in Boston, and you would never know that she was not born on Beacon Hill." When Dunham protests, "But you implied that she had no sensibility," his companion springs back with his insistent wit: "So I did! Social genius and sensibility are two very different things; the cynic might contend they were incompatible, but I won't insist so far." Though Winterbourne, being less proud and skeptical than his counterpart, falls under Daisy's spell more readily than does Staniford under Lydia's, he is as consistently aware of her lack of sensibility. In sum, the intangible quality that both young women appear to lack is no more compensated for by social grace than it is by prettiness.

Just because the missing quality is never clearly defined, it takes on added significance and constitutes the principal barrier in the relationship between these young people. And as both Howells and James account for the ultimate removal of this barrier, they bring to focus certain positive qualities in Daisy and Lydia, other than the conventional ones of beauty and social grace, which effect a fundamental revision in the outlook of the young men. These positive qualities in both cases emerge from a series of events, strikingly similar in both novels, each performing something of the same function in contributing to the final revelation.

Lydia and Daisy are both thrust into dangerously compromising situations. Lydia has not the organized society about her which would at once offer her protection and provide the proper cue to behavior. If she retreats, she might find a measure of security in isolation. If she advances, she exposes herself, if not to real danger, certainly to probable misinterpretation. Without being aware of the existence of

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the choice, she instinctively takes the latter course. Daisy, on the other hand, is surrounded by organized society on all sides at both Vevay and Rome. She has the option of submitting to its demands, and losing her identity, in return for the prospect of eventual social acceptance, or of rebelling against its conventions, and defying its time-honored codes of behavior. Like Lydia she is unaware of the choice and instinctively takes the latter course. For Lydia the danger lies in exposing herself to the unknown, for Daisy in removing herself from it. Proceeding initially in what seem to be different directions, the two young women achieve similar results.

Both Staniford and Winterbourne are from the first kept from dealing with them on wonted terms of condescension. Staniford might have been able to maintain his attitude of mockery had Lydia deliberately avoided encounters with him. Winterbourne's kindly but patronizing air might have persisted had Daisy met his advances in orthodox fashion, rather than escaped them. The unpredictable move was in each case the natural one for both Daisy and Lydia, and the one most calculated to upset the preconceptions, as well as the emotional equilibrium, of their respective vis-a-vis.

Along with their unpredictability, both young women attach themselves to gentlemen who inspire the disapproval of Winterbourne and Staniford. Staniford's reaction to Lydia's friendliness to Hicks is more violent than Winterbourne's irritated curiosity as to the nature of Daisy's relationship with Giovanelli. But for both gentlemen the situation is seen to be doubly compromising because of the absence of caution on the part of the young women. In Lydia's case, Staniford is aware of her innocence, but is harassed by the misinterpretations of the crew: "He began to be angry with her ignorance and inexperience. It became intolerable to him that a woman should be going about with no more knowledge of the world than a child, and entangling herself in relations with all sorts of people. . . . From the mate's insinuation that she ought to be warned, it was evident that they thought her interested in Hicks; and the mate had come, like Dunham, to leave the responsibility with Staniford."

Winterbourne, whose instincts regarding Daisy's innocence do not mislead him until the fatal encounter at the Colosseum, feels the same kind of responsibility for Daisy's reputation. In one of his memorable scenic effects, James sketches the gossiping American colony seated before St. Peter's while a vesper service is being conducted in the adjacent choir. As Daisy's behavior is discussed, Winterbourne, like Staniford, becomes vexed, and feels a similar sense of responsibility about warning Daisy: "Winterbourne was not pleased with

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what he heard; but when, coming out upon the great steps of the church, he saw Daisy, who had emerged before him, get into an open cab with her accomplice and roll away through the cynical streets of Rome, he could not deny to himself that she was going very far indeed. . . . He made an attempt after this to give a hint to Mrs. Miller."

The decision in favor of personal intervention renders both Winterbourne and Staniford actively implicated in the fate of their young women. From the time the decision is consciously taken, they are involved in each step that leads to the final outcome. Their decision alters their rôle of observer. Although Winterbourne is never the active participant that Staniford becomes after his declaration of passion, he seeks Daisy out at her home and openly indicates an interest in her future.

Staniford's emotional commitment comes in the wake of what might be termed a moral revelation. He has made the complete turnabout from a skeptical to an almost humorlessly earnest young man when he explains the circumstances which brought on the crisis. Lydia's suppressed indignation at seeing him ride with the frivolous Mrs. Rivers in Messina has shed an unaccustomed light on his position: ". . . it was harm of me to go if I didn't quite respect her—if I thought her silly, and was willing to be amused with her. One hasn't any right to do that. I saw this when I saw you." It is apparent that Lydia's mere presence has become a symbol so meaningful that it has initiated a complete shift in Staniford's outlook, in his habitual mode of self-evaluation, along with revealing his love for her. The significance of the moral revelation which precedes the emotional is indicated by Staniford's need to ascertain Lydia's faith in his seriousness even before he attempts to discover whether she returns his love. "Do you remember once—the second time we talked together—that you said Dunham was in earnest, and you wouldn't answer when I asked you about myself? . . . I didn't care, then. I care very much now." The young woman totally lacking in sensibility and worldly wisdom, qualities prized most highly by the Staniford of the earlier half of the novel, succeeds in converting him by a simple example of unerring moral instinct. The credibility of Howells' case may be debated; the conviction with which he presents it is unmistakable.

In the case of Winterbourne, it is a similar type of moral revelation that is brought on by Daisy's dying words. Prior to this event Winterbourne's emotional commitment wavers as his faith in Daisy's innocence fails the final test. The significant point is the connection between the two: as his emotions become more deeply involved, the question of Daisy's innocence appears more crucial. His meditations

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on the question become increasingly refined: "He said to himself that she was too light and childish, too uncultivated and unreasoning, too provincial, to have reflected upon her ostracism, or even to have perceived it. Then at other moments he believed that she carried about in her elegant and irresponsible little organism a defiant, passionate, perfectly observant consciousness of the impression she produced. He asked himself whether Daisy's defiance came from the consciousness of innocence, or from her being, essentially, a young person of the reckless class. It must be admitted that holding one's self to a belief in Daisy's 'innocence' came to seem to Winterbourne more and more a matter of fine-spun gallantry." And finally, after the encounter in the Colosseum, his mind is made up: "She was a young lady whom a gentleman need no longer be at pains to respect. . . . He felt angry with himself that he had bothered so much about the right way of regarding Miss Daisy Miller." It is when he has at the last apprehended her complete innocence that James appends the emotional note: "She sent me a message before her death which I didn't understand at the time; but I have understood it since. She would have appreciated one's esteem."

The significant rôle of the moral principle in both novels is indicated by intimations on the part of both James and Howells that it has not hitherto been a factor in the romantic relationships of these young men. Winterbourne "was inclined to think Miss Daisy Miller was a flirt—a pretty American flirt. He had never, as yet, had any relations with young ladies of this category." The reader is told that his experience has been confined to the dangerous European coquette, the women "provided, for respectability's sake, with husbands." Staniford's habitual tone toward women "mocked while it caressed all their little pretenses and artificialities; he addressed them as if they must be in the joke of themselves, and did not expect to be taken seriously. . . . He did not seek them as Dunham did; their society was not a matter of life or death with him; but he had an elder-brotherly kindness for the whole sex." Thus Winterbourne's relationships, though serious, have not forced him to contend with the question of moral principle, while Staniford's have been too playful to admit of this criterion.

For both men, it is the first time they have been jolted out of their customary attitude toward the sex. Winterbourne's application of the moral principle to Daisy's action is as much an innovation for him as is the fact of his growing interest in a young woman of her apparent inexperience. Unwittingly, Winterbourne is judging Daisy by a higher standard than he has hitherto applied to women. His

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mistake lies in thinking she violates it, instead of perceiving she embodies it. Staniford, who is quick to see the rigor with which Lydia adheres to this moral principle, is nevertheless slow in comprehending the extent of his own underlying commitment to it. Winterbourne's metamorphosis, because it is not as swift and melodramatic as Staniford's, should not therefore be thought less complete. It is like James to have his young man return to the accustomed pattern, to the normal pursuits. Our last glimpse of Winterbourne in Geneva is almost identical with our first: ". . . a report that he is 'studying' hard—an intimation that he is much interested in a very clever foreign lady." The irony lies in the omission of what the reader by this time realizes is the essentially altered state of mind in which he resumes his activities.

The moral revelation which both Staniford and Winterbourne experience is intimately connected with the kind of influence to which they have been subject during the course of their respective relationships. An explanation of this influence is never directly offered by either Howells or James. It is suggested as much by the appealing gaucheries as by the minor triumphs of their heroines. But the note that recurs in both instances is "innocence." From its applications in context we may conclude that it involves an instinctive moral judgment capable of defeating, in Staniford's case, the convinced skeptic, as well as softening, in Winterbourne's, the hardened homme d'esprit. The touchstone of its final merit lies in its triumph over the elusive sensibility that Staniford recalled longingly, and the knowledgeableness that Winterbourne required.

Howells and James never lost the sense for this order of innocence. Its relevance to the American types in their later work give Daisy and Lydia an importance beyond that which is already theirs.

Afternote

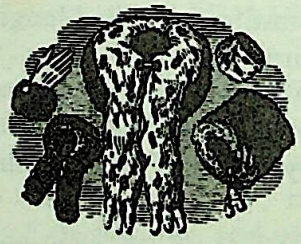
Included in Albert Mordell, *Discovery of a Genius* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1961) are two early Howells pieces (both 1879) on *Daisy Miller*, and the later essays, "Henry James, Jr." (1882) and "Mr. James' *Daisy Miller*" (1901), together with useful introductory comment. Among recent critics, John Roland Dove, "Howells' Irrational Heroines," *University of Texas Studies in English*, XXXV (1956), 64–80, suggests that Howells' heroines may be explained by a perverse irrationality, of either romantic or the moralistic variety, and William Wasserstrom, *Heiress of All the Ages* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1959) sees Lydia's "tarnished" innocence as illustrating the "leading heroine of genteel fiction" who, while "neither an angel nor a devil . . . joins the benignity of the first with the piquancy of the

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second." Equally provocative recent interpretations of Daisy are Peter Buitenhuis, "From Daisy Miller to Julia Bride: 'A Whole Passage of Intellectual History,'" *American Quarterly*, XI (Summer, 1959), 136–46, which sees James as tracing in these two works "the transition of the consciousness of a certain type of American girl from innocence to experience"; David H. Hirsch, "William Dean Howells and Daisy Miller," *English Language Notes*, I (1963), 123–28, which develops the theory that James's and Howells's apologies for Daisy's innocence "are similar but not identical"; and John H. Randall III, "The Genteel Reader and *Daisy Miller*," *American Quarterly*, XVII (Fall, 1965), 568–81, which sees in Daisy's treatment by the American colony a paradigm of "the disintegration of value" in post-Civil War America.

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James F. Scott

Beat Literature and the American Teen Cult

FROM A REMARKABLE VARIETY OF SOURCES WE ARE NOW TOLD THAT THE so-called "Beat movement" in American literature is about to expire. Whether this forecast will ultimately prove correct is slightly irrelevant. The striking thing is the untoward haste with which the American public has sought to dispose of these postwar prodigals, who have already been honored with quite an array of wishfully premature epitaphs. Surely the presence of the scraggly citizens of Greenwich, North Beach and Venice West must be highly embarrassing. Perhaps even more embarrassing is that popular journalism seems at a loss to account for them. A typical observer wonders, "What have we done to deserve this?" [1] While in this frame of mind, we can do little more than wish the Beats embalmed and interred with all deliberate speed.

The Beats do not really defy analysis. It's just that gasps of dismay are more heartening than close scrutiny. For in spite of their freewheeling eroticism and the vendetta they have sworn against both razor and scrub brush, the Beats are less alien to American culture than we would like to suppose. They are as unpopular among the rank and file of Americans as Benedict Arnold among the DAR, but society's strident outbursts against them often leave the impression of a harassed magician trying desperately to exorcise a demon without admitting, even privately, that his own magic has accidentally called it forth. This self-deception probably accounts for the irrelevance of much criticism of Beat literature.

Majority opinion notwithstanding, the failure of the Beats as literary artists has little to do with their widely publicized moral depravity and social negativism. Genius is not an exclusive possession of the righteous, nor is an artist obliged to edify the local chamber of commerce. No. The literary failure of the Beats is simply a bankruptcy of imaginative insight

[1] Paul O'Neill, "The Only Rebellion Around," *Life*, XLVII (November 30, 1959), 130.

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born of their unwillingness to nourish, direct or even properly motivate their creative faculties. But this failure of the Beat imagination, I fear, is related to a larger failure of American culture. More specifically, the Beat conception of the creative process, shot through with inconsistency and naïveté, is an indirect yet almost inevitable result of powerful social forces now active beneath the surface of American life, forces which glorify immaturity and thus obscure an essential distinction between adolescent spontaneity and adult creativity. In other words, the Beat movement represents the first incursion into serious literature of an already well entrenched popular mystique which accords exaggerated significance to the vision and values of adolescence. Furthermore, the reluctance of many editors and supplement writers to refer Beat literature to this larger frame of reference is almost more disturbing than the Beats themselves, because it measures the reluctance of the American public to examine those cultural pressures that have caused the Beat movement to move.

The continuing popularity of the fuzzy and convenient "youth must have its fling" interpretation of the Beats typifies a general retreat from careful inquiry. This shibboleth is unsuitable because the Beats' rebellion is not merely a temporary evasion of responsibility. Rather, it is a way of art and life which permanently consecrates the pose and gestures of adolescence. For though most full-fledged Beats are well beyond teenage (some will never see thirty again), their patterns of behavior often reveal regressive adolescent traits, such as the use of special speech and dress as badges of identity and status or the compulsive hostility to authority, which causes all questions of value to be referred to the judgment of a select peer group. Going somewhat further, Ned Polsky identifies among many Beats of Greenwich Village a "persistence in more or less chronic form of some psychic states characterizing . . . adolescent pathology." [2] But even when pathology is not involved, the Beats—especially the literate and literary Beats—strenuously cling to an adolescent outlook which regards discipline or concentration as repressive and intelligence as a general nuisance. And though they profess to find this same view in the aesthetic radicalism of Whitman and the social iconoclasm of Thoreau, what the Beats really respect is not Whitman and Thoreau (neither of whom is immature) but an image of Whitman and Thoreau distorted by the eyes of adolescence. The tragicomic predicament of the Beats is that, having forsworn maturity, they have truncated their own creative life.

Unfortunately, however, the self-conscious cultivation of juvenility is

[2] "The Village Beat Scene: Summer 1960," *Dissent*, VIII (Summer 1961), 339.

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not restricted to the isolated cadres of Beatdom. In fact, the emergence of an American teen cult is one of the most disturbing events of our generation. Undergirded by popular psychology, exploited by commercial advertising, and dramatized by the public arts, the sentimental enshrinement of adolescent values has come to touch nearly all areas of American life. Not only is the adolescent patronized in the permissive home and the "progressive" school; his attitudes and beliefs now threaten to become normative for the whole adult population.

The growing "adolescent directedness" of today's adults is reflected conspicuously in their almost obsessive concern with how the American teen-ager feels about the world. When Eugene Gilbert initiated his column, "What Young People Think," in the middle 1950s, he could hardly have foreseen that within five years this piece would become one of the most popular syndicated features of the Associated Press. And Gilbert's whirlwind success is certainly not an isolated event. Writing in 1958, Dwight MacDonald turned to the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* to prove that the American people had developed an overblown interest in adolescence.[3] At that time, the number of entries under "adolescence" had jumped from 16 in 1941-43 to 51 in 1955-57, and the entries under "teen-age" had mushroomed from 2 in 1941-43 to 11 in 1955-57. Already, little tidbits like "What Makes Teen-Agers Swoon" had become a regular part of American magazine fare.[4] But the teen cult has since entered a new phase. The use of the word "adolescence," which sounds faintly clinical and has little commercial appeal, has declined in favor of the more attractive term "teen-age." Although *Readers' Guide* for 1959-61 contains only 24 references to adolescence, a glance at the entries under "teen-age" reveals 13 cross references embracing the whole spectrum of adolescent activity—teen drinking, teen marriage, teen parties, teen reading, to cite only a few samples. If he so wishes, the American adult can now use even the most fashionable magazines to participate vicariously in the life of the teen-ager, whose every thought, deed and desire has been elaborately chronicled.

Another index of the adolescent leaning of our culture is the tendency of adults to appropriate for their own enjoyment forms of entertainment once pitched exclusively to the young. The present enthusiasm of TV audiences for westerns is a case in point. Attaching the tag "adult" to such shows as "Gunsmoke" or "Tales of Wells Fargo" betokens more than semantic sleight of hand on the part of the television industry. It indicates the advertisers' sensitivity to a pronounced change in the public

[3] "Profiles: A Caste, A Culture, A Market—I," *New Yorker*, XXXIV (November 22, 1958), esp. 67-68.

[4] *McCall's*, LXXXIII (December 1955), 38 ff.

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attitude toward the old horse opera. As late as a decade ago, the most popular western movies were still oriented to the taste of an audience not beyond the earliest teens.[5] The crooning cowboy, for example, was obviously an adolescent's hero, whose behavior invariably followed conventions which the elders of American society thought conducive to the moral uplift of impressionable youngsters. Though he might turn the full fury of his sixguns upon a gang of cattle rustlers, he would never smoke, drink, gamble or express so much as a trace of sexual interest in the damsels who lavished affection upon him. But this atmosphere of sentimental fantasy has now vanished, a fact which suggests the western is no longer an instrument used by adult society to inculcate Boy Scout ideals in the young. Instead, the new TV western (and the movie western as well) affects a superficial "realism," discarding stock features of the old cowboy movie, like that of the hero who outspokenly advertises his teetotalism. The strategy underlying this metamorphosis of convention, it seems, is to reduce the embarrassment of the older adolescent or the adult when he sits down to watch a show which is still palpably childish in everything but a few incidental motifs. A truly adult western —one, like "The Ox-Bow Incident" or "Treasure of Sierra Madre," which asks from an audience the full engagement of mature ethical judgment—has yet to win a place on American television screens. And the "adult" western in its present form is nearly as shallow and stereotyped as the Gene Autry and Hopalong Cassidy films of yesteryear. Really, the changes recently wrought in the western signify only that in the last decade American adults have become willing to surrender many once powerful authority symbols in exchange for the privilege of glutting themselves upon entertainment suited to the mentality of the late adolescent.

Furthermore, the sentimentalizing of adolescence is currently one of the most striking features of the public arts. The recent cinematic version of James Cozzens' *By Love Possessed* markedly exemplifies this fact, the more so because the novel itself flays all forms of sentimentality, especially feckless sentiment squandered upon unworthy adolescents. Except for Ann Winner, whose role is minor, there is scarcely a sympathetic portrait of adolescence in Cozzens' elaborate chronicle of the contemporary New England Brahmins. Ralph Detweiler is shiftless and irresponsible; Warren Winner is positively vicious; Joan Moore, though pathetic, hardly commands respect. Helen Detweiler's suicide, the ultimate catastrophe of the novel, is directly occasioned by Ralph's moral cowardice, which impels him to betray his sister's ill-founded trust in his good

[5] Films analogous to the TV western can, of course, be found in the 1930s and 1940s, though they are decidedly a minority of those produced.

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nature. And the sentimentalizing of youthful folly draws Cozzens' most caustic thrusts, as reflected, for example, in Julius Penrose's fierce outburst against our "age . . . of capital F Feeling—[our] century of the gulp, the lump in the throat, the good cry." The film script of *By Love Possessed,* however, is remarkable for its complete inversion of this attitude, a transformation complete enough to approach parody. Two changes are particularly noteworthy, one in the presentation of character and another in the arrangement of plot. First of all, Ralph is metamorphosed into Arthur Winner's son, who is by no means an indolent delinquent but a quick-witted, charming figure, probably more intelligent than his father and surely more likeable. And the young man's alleged "rape" of Veronica Kovacs is motivated, not as in the novel by his inability to control an erotic urge, but by an almost praiseworthy defiance of an adult society too prim and stuffy to allow any genuine impulse or emotion. Finally, the plot of Cozzens' novel is wrenched so that Arthur Winner, the movie character, whose approach to life is drearily bookish, appears to be educated in humanity by the imagination and energy of his son. According to the film, Arthur's decision not to expose Noah Tuttle results obliquely from the son's challenge of the father's cold, legalistic cast of mind. The movie thus conveys the decided impression (at which Cozzens would doubtlessly wince) that the world would be a better place if we could all somehow recapture the outlook of the eighteen-year-old.

These and other related phenomena seem to declare that many Americans, gainsaying their maturity, now unbashedly seek to recover the worldview of adolescence. The reasons for this are not easy to discern. Whatever they may be, however, the canonization of immaturity thus produced must perforce shake familial control, reduce the role of discipline in the formation of character, minimize the worth of patiently acquired learning and finally accredit to America's "typical teen-ager" a monopoly upon insight, inventiveness and vigor.

The public, of course, indulges its esteem for adolescence only within a carefully circumscribed frame of reference, never permitting it to undercut certain consensually validated symbols of adult prestige. In most respects, the place of the parent, the teacher and the clergyman is still sacrosanct. But herein lies a paradox. For while we formally honor the home, the school and the church, we continue to revel emotionally in a puerile worldview which renders these professed values meaningless, almost dishonest. And our divided loyalties cloud the development of mature insight into inherited codes of behavior, insight necessary to keep our institutions from turning into mere repositories of cultural fossils.

At the moment, this ambiguous commitment of the American people

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to the aggressive "spontaneity" of teendom on the one hand and to the reassuring stability of tradition on the other has its most adverse effect in the confused and confusing directives that devolve from it upon American youth. Currently fashionable counsel to the rising generation, disseminated through all the mass media, might (allowing for a trace of hyperbole) be summarized thus: Listen to mom and dad, even though their minds are darkened by middle age; study diligently in school, even though effective living requires only a bright, bacteria-free smile; respect Moses and the Commandments, even though a shiny, up-to-date Savior would at least have the decency to be beardless and would probably come only to lead a songfest at the local church. Obviously, this tissue of contradictions will withstand little battering, hardly the utterance of a cynical "pooh!" And this circumstance, I think, provides a clue to the coming of the American Beatnik.

Naturally, the current surfeit of adolescent sentiment cannot have caused the Beat movement directly. But it has contributed to the atmosphere in which Beat literature flourishes, because it gravely impairs genuine understanding of creative endeavor and thus deprives the adult world of all defenses against the Beats except aimless ridicule and ill formulated disgust. For by comparison with what presently passes for the public conscience, even the logic of Beatdom looks cogent and persuasive. Confronted by the muddle of conflicting public values, the Beats have simply shattered the moral frame of reference imposed by convention and then deified the adolescent element already permeating American life. In this sense, at least, the Beats are very much our spiritual sons, though we may still prefer to regard them as something visited upon us by a peculiarly malevolent conjunction of the stars.

Actually, whatever coincidence is involved in the coming of the Beats is not stellar, but historical. Wars and rumors of war, so often destructive of mushy idealism, have figured importantly in the stentorian nay-saying of the Beat writers. Moreover, the current international situation, especially the threat of nuclear holocaust, has also helped give the Beat *nego* its decidedly adolescent accent. The dreadful promise of the hell bomb makes it rather easy for the Beats to assume their posture of rebelliousness and irresponsibility. Since the elder generation gave us Hiroshima, the Beats feel free, like the disaffiliate canine hero of Lawrence Ferlinghetti's "Dog," to regard every symbol of authority as "just another fire hydrant." Similarly, since the prospect of atomic destruction is still with us, the Beats absolve themselves of all social and political concern. Like Ray Smith of Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums,* they have all seen in the sky the mystic writing which tells them, "This [the atomic bomb] is the Impossibility of the Existence of Anything." And accepting this

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fact as the consummate wisdom, they feel no incentive to grow up mentally. Thus has the anxiety accompanying a special historical occasion distilled from the total atmosphere of American culture, tainted with a profoundly negative bias and finally crystallized into dogma a set of values which militates against both intellectual and aesthetic maturity.

The hallmark of the Beat mystique, whether applied to critical intelligence or creative imagination, is the scaling down of everything to adolescent proportions. Nowhere is this demonstrated more pointedly than in the supposed Zen Buddhist influence upon Beat literature and life. Within the arcanum of Buddhist tradition, the doctrine and practice of Zen is entirely respectable, as its anti-rationalism and radical individualism are absorbed into a higher synthesis of human feeling. But washed upon the shores of San Francisco Bay, the Beat Buddha has undergone a disconcerting sea change.[6] Somehow there has vanished the exacting Zen ritual which, according to its practitioners, resolves the persistent Western dualism of Hebraic spirit and flesh, Hellenic subject and object. Even when the Beats nominally preserve Buddhist ideology, the distortion is egregious. Who would recognize the Zen concept of absolute absorption into the life experience after Kerouac has translated it into the patois of Sal Paradise, narrator of *On the Road*? "The only people for me," says Sal, "are . . . the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars." Here the metaphor of the fireworks display suggests the essentially adolescent cast of Kerouac's Zen. The figure of the Zen lunatic also appears in this novel, transmogrified into the "HOLY GOOF," Dean Moriarity. But though Dean is wholly goofy, his irrationalism is adolescent, not Oriental. His chief diversions, far from philosophic but very sophomoric, are knocking in car fenders and knocking over high school girls. Sitting beneath a Bodhi tree, Dean would look more incongruous than Voltaire must have seemed under the tutelage of the Jesuits. "Beat Zen," admits Alan Watts, in spite of his sympathy for the movement, ". . . confuses 'anything goes' at the existential level with 'anything goes' on the artistic and social levels."[7] To put the matter a bit less kindly, the Beat attitude dissolves the wisdom of

[6] To my knowledge, the only serious student of Zen among the Beat writers is Gary Snyder, a talented poet and capable Orientalist, whose sensitive translation of Han-Shan's "Cold Mountain Poems" appeared in *Evergreen Review*, II (Autumn 1958), 69-80. Although the Beats apparently consider Snyder their compatriot (Kerouac even produced a fictionalized biography of his career in *The Dharma Bums*), Snyder's respect for intelligence and learning is foreign to Beatdom and his association with the movement seems accidental, probably only temporary.

[7] *Beat Zen, Square Zen, and Zen* (San Francisco: City Lights Press, 1959), p. 17.

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the East into exhibitionism, restlessness and maundering sexuality, all of which are directly related to the Beats' glorification of adolescence.

Carried into aesthetics, this wallowing in the world of adolescence, even if we waive its ethical and social implications, is prejudicial to artistic excellence. Gregory Corso, in "Variations upon a Generation," speaks earnestly of creating a new kind of poetic statement "whose objectivity will be the accuracy of its introspection," but his published work gives little evidence that he has achieved this goal. Quite innocently he asks a critic, "Do you think I need form?" [8] As for Kerouac, self-appointed philosopher of Beatdom, he has already answered this question in the negative. "Remove literary, grammatical, and syntactical inhibition," [9] he tells his would-be protégés. Thus unfettered, the literary tyro may then experiment with the process of "scoping," which Kerouac defines as "not 'selectivity' of expression but following free deviation (association) of mind into limitless blow-on subject seas of thought, swimming in seas of English with no discipline other than rhetorical exhalation and expostulated statement." [10] Alas . . . Beguiled by dubious Reichian assumptions which reinforce their adolescent contempt for discipline, the Beats persistently ignore the fact that the creative process presumes not only the interplay of powerful unconscious drives but also the imposition of exceptional psychic controls, capable of balancing, integrating and rendering socially intelligible a highly unstable compound of essentially private images. And conceiving of creativity exclusively as an emancipation from form, the Beats have produced a literature which tends either toward unregulated proliferation of incident or unintelligible subjective ecstasy.

Both of these faults are conspicuous in what is perhaps the most durable literary accomplishment of the Beat movement, Allen Ginsberg's "Howl." Their presence illustrates how the elevation of adolescent impulse to the level of an aesthetic deforms poetic expression. Admirable in its compassionate perception of postwar frustration and disenchantment, "Howl" probably contains the stuff of greatness. But its jumbled profusion of experience and its spurious mysticism, especially marked in sections one and three respectively, detract measurably from its worth. Ironically, the most successful part of the poem in no way reflects Ginsberg's pet theories about the "Meaning Mind practiced in spontaneity [that] invents forms in its own image." [11]

[8] Quoted by Carolyn Gaiser, "Gregory Corso: A Poet the Beat Way," *A Casebook on the Beat*, ed. Thomas Parkinson (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1961), p. 274.
[9] "Belief & Technique for Modern Prose," *Evergreen Review*, II (Spring 1959), 57.
[10] "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," *Evergreen Review*, II (Summer 1958), 72.
[11] "Notes Written on Finally Recording 'Howl,'" Parkinson, *Casebook*, p. 28.

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Section two of "Howl"—an anguished attack upon the bases of modern materialism—is quite traditional in structure and owes much of its impact to a litanic repetition which creates a sense of robot activity. This part of the poem is organized around a few carefully chosen allusions (the inscrutable sphinx; blood-craving Moloch; the tyrannical Jehovah) and is elaborated through a well integrated pattern of images (chiefly isolation and blindness). Both the *Old Testament* references and the religious associations of litany are apposite in that they suggest modern man's idolatrous machine worship which confers charismatic sanction upon the power of the mechanized, militarist state. Even the final abandonment of the litany in favor of a series of loosely associated images can be justified on the grounds that the symbolic movement here makes madness the ultimate result of an ever increasing rationalization of life. To pretend, however, that Ginsberg's achievement has anything to do with the Beat cult of spontaneity is pure hokum. Quite the contrary. Discussing "Howl" with his disciples, Ginsberg speaks enthusiastically about bop prosody and trance-like rhythm, but in his rare moments of genuine accomplishment he employs techniques common to all good poetry since the time of Pindar: controlled figure, meaningful allusion and consistent rhetorical progression within a recognizable literary form. Like most of the Beat fraternity, though, Ginsberg is so suspicious of craft and design that he is not likely to write very well very often.

Hence the eventual fate of the Beat movement: early or late it will fizzle out and be remembered only as a literary hotrod that blew its gaskets before completing the race. For the Beats have little to offer belles lettres. Confronted by the wholesale corruption of language, they have countered feebly with a poetic jargon which is as manneristic and jaded as the prose of Madison Avenue. Set upon by the encroachments of philistine technocracy, they have withdrawn into a spiritual nirvana of peyote, marijuana and mescaline. Challenged by the appalling possibilities of political and social crisis, they have cowered into super-select coteries and now peer furtively at the world through the begrimed windows of their Grant Street pads. In short, the Beats have played perfectly the role of the adolescent delinquent who, despite his elaborate pretensions to omniscience, knows only enough about the adult world to sustain a boastful but shallow cynicism. Lacking the catholicity of experience necessary to major literary achievement, most of the Beat writers are destined for a quick eclipse of fame.

True, not all that the Beats stand for is bad. If nothing else, they have at least reminded us, at a time when the public poet is lucky to squeeze a short lyric between two soap ads, of poetry's historical relatedness to forms of communal expression such as the ritual chant and the oral

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saga. They have also shown, in spite of their gloomy airs, that there can still be something exciting about the profession of letters. Sometimes, I think, we may even be impressed by the praiseworthy candor of the best Beat sentiment, as expressed, for example, by John Wieners,[12] whose "A Poem for Painters" confesses itself to be

> Only the score of a man's
> struggle to stay with
> what is his own, what
> lies within him to do.

Without the consolations of romantic elegance or cosmic myth, the poet, as Wieners perceives, must now summon from his own mind and will resources sufficient to preserve the life of the emotions in a world increasingly more hostile to them. But though aware of these circumstances, the Beats have brought only the sensibility of an adolescent to bear upon a problem which requires the courage and mental stamina of a man. And they have failed pitifully.

That brings up the moral which I believe may be gleaned from having jostled elbows with the Beat generation, a moral germane to the predicament of the man of letters in contemporary America. Appropriately, the Beats have called attention to this predicament in their usual left-handed and negative way. Intellectually paralyzed by the burden the artist must carry, they have dramatically shown how great is the present inducement not to accept adulthood. And society, in its turn, has manifested a similar want of maturity by responding to the Beat revolt mostly with bewilderment and chagrin, rarely with tough-minded, responsible criticism. Reading most popular commentary, we can hardly escape the impression that if the Beats would just shave, wash and begin to compose Mother's Day verses everything would be all right. Really, the American public seems to wish only that the Beats would exchange the apocalyptic fury of Cassandra for the mellow piety of Pollyanna. But these quite dissimilar young ladies are alike in one crucial respect: both share the viewpoint of the adolescent who sees either black or white, unaware of the manner in which a truly creative intelligence fuses assent and dissent, hopefulness and foreboding, into a dialectic of exploration and analysis.

This dialectic, fundamental to the health of society, is seriously lacking in America today, a fact which not only helps explain the Beat rebellion but also indicates why the dedicated artist, neither Beat nor

[12] Like Gary Snyder, Wieners belongs only to the periphery of the Beat movement, but he is generally associated with the San Francisco group because *The Hotel Wentley Poems* have been published by one of the more important Beat outlets, the Auerhahn Press.

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Square, lives mostly in isolation. It indicates, for example, why the majority of today's American poets—poets with the refined sensuousness of Theodore Roethke and the searching social conscience of Randall Jarrell—have rejected the town for the gown. For if, as Lionel Trilling asserts, "literature is the human activity that takes the fullest and most precise account of variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty," [13] it follows that the literary man who would be true to his calling must cultivate the broadest possible contact with life. Ideally, then, the stimulus of his art should come from the whole community rather than from a specialized academic environment, whatever opportunities this environment affords. But when a society such as ours, eager to discourage the intellectual friction arising out of its pluralism, subtly represses its critical powers and transmutes much of its creative energy into idle gush over the adolescent, the artist feels compelled to retreat from the public world of thinking men's filters and filtered men's thoughts. Within the last generation, this withdrawal from the community has become a typical gesture on the part of the American poet, though his estrangement has drawn small notice from the general public. And now come the Beats, desperately preaching a new kind of alienation, absolute and unremitting. Perversely extravagant, they are much harder to ignore than the temperate, rational academician, so hard to ignore, in fact, that before passing into oblivion they may shock a few people beyond the universities into re-examining the American dream, or perhaps more accurately, the American somnolence. If so, the Beats may yet render some service to the intellectuals whom they despise. So long as this remains a possibility, we might do well to tolerate their beards and bongo drums.

Afternote

Today the impulses of Beatdom survive in the reports of LSD excursions and in the continued presence of dimly lit "coffee-houses," chief visible monument of the Kerouac-Ginsberg era. In orthodox circles, the cult of adolescence still flourishes in the teenage orientation of movies and jukebox music, perhaps also in the automobile obsession of well-to-do exurbanites. One noteworthy development of the last few years, however, is the renewal of interest in the political order (something one might attribute to the "thousand days" of Kennedy). Significantly, the former capital of the Beat world has become central headquarters of the "new left," as is evidenced in the free speech movement on the Berkeley campus. Further, a considerable number of socially disaffiliated young people are now finding their way into organizations like SNCC.

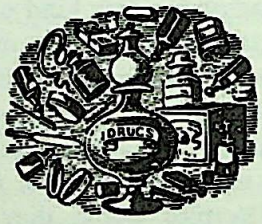
[13] *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: Viking Press, 1950), p. xiii.

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CORE, and SDS. Whether the participation of American youth in these socio-political movements will really contribute to their maturation and whether the movements themselves will manage to arouse middle-class America from its split-level torpor are questions which cannot be answered at this time.

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David W. Noble

Cooper, Leatherstocking and the Death of the American Adam

SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF *Virgin Land* IN 1950, ALL STUDENTS OF AMERican culture have been forced to begin their consideration of nineteenth-century America by taking into account the myth of the West. Henry Nash Smith has conclusively demonstrated that the imagination of Americans after 1800 was dominated by the belief that the American West represented a redemptive nature which would provide spiritual salvation for the men who settled upon it. European man, corrupted by civilization, was reborn, made innocent, when he abandoned old world history for new world nature; he was then that new man, the American.

In 1955, R.W.B. Lewis published his book, *The American Adam,* which brought the perspective of the American belief in a rebirth of innocence through the redemptive influence of physical nature to an analysis of nineteenth-century American literature. Professor Lewis found that the uniqueness of the American novel was based squarely on its acceptance of the myth of the West. European novelists placed their heroes within the confines of historical culture, within time. But the American novelist, beginning with James Fenimore Cooper, evoked heroes who had escaped from traditional society, from history, and lived freely in harmony with nature:

"If there was a fictional Adamic hero unambiguously treated—celebrated in his very Adamism—it was the hero of Cooper's *The Deerslayer*: a self-reliant young man who does seem to have sprung from nowhere and whose characteristic pose . . . was the solitary stance in the presence of nature and God. . . . The evolution of the hero as Adam in the fiction of the New World . . . begins rightly with Natty Bumppo. I call such a figure the hero in space, in two senses of the word. First, the hero seems to take his start outside time . . . and, second, his initial habitat is space as spaciousness, as the unbounded, the area of total possibility. . . . I agree with Lawrence in seeing the novel as the culmination of a process

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which exemplifies the American myth. Lawrence's words seem to me at once exact, poetic, and inimitable: 'The Leatherstocking novels . . . go backwards from old age to golden youth. That is the true myth of America. She starts old, old, wrinkled and writhing in an old skin. And there is a gradual sloughing off of the old skin, towards a new youth. It is the myth of America.' "

I would like to suggest, however, another way of reading the Leatherstocking series that leads to an absolute contradiction of Professor Lewis' position. I believe that if one reads the series beginning with *Deerslayer* and follows the aging Leatherstocking through his life cycle in *The Last of the Mohicans, The Pathfinder, The Pioneers* and *The Prairie,* one becomes aware that Cooper is indeed writing about the American myth but with the purpose of destroying rather than celebrating the American Adam.[1]

Let me begin my analysis by recalling that, according to the myth of the American West, the American Adam was to be the archetype of a new society; the myth was to become reality. The European, becoming American, was to live freely in space and in harmony with nature. The ultimate success of the myth depended upon its earthly fulfillment. Now, as Professor Lewis has declared, the figure of Deerslayer is presented at the beginning of the novel as such an earthly fulfillment of the myth. He is the American Adam. He exists freely in space and in harmony with nature. He is outside of time and society. But *The Deerslayer* is a novel that is filled with drama. And we can ask how drama can enter the life of the new Adam in the new Eden for drama depends on disharmony. How, then, does Cooper introduce disharmony into Eden?

If Deerslayer represents the perfect expression of the Adamic myth, Cooper immediately calls our attention to the fact that the human Adam and Eve, dwelling within the supposedly redemptive bosom of nature, are not innocents. Hurry Harry and Judith are magnificent human specimens but their hearts are full of disharmony. And surely Cooper tells us that no amount of living with nature will abolish that disharmony. Cooper then reveals that the only one of these first settlers on the frontier who shares Deerslayer's innocence is Judith's sister, Hetty, a girl who transcends humanity because her mind has never reached maturity. I be-

[1] The sequence in which Cooper wrote the Leatherstocking series is *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Prairie* (1827), *The Pathfinder* (1840) and *The Deerslayer* (1841). From this chronology, it is obvious that Cooper did not have a unifying conception for the five novels in mind when he wrote *The Pioneers.* But it is my argument that Cooper was aware of the myth of the West and that he set about self-consciously criticizing it in *The Pioneers.* I would argue that as his criticism of the myth continued, he pursued it back to its origins in the first half of the eighteenth century and thus concluded the series with *The Deerslayer.*

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lieve, therefore, that Cooper has asked the reader to distinguish between the myth of the West, Deerslayer, and the reality of the West, the Hutter family and Hurry Harry. And I believe that Cooper deliberately goes on to take Deerslayer out of those very qualities of timelessness and unbounded spaciousness which Professor Lewis sees as the necessary qualities of the American Adam.

Deerslayer is a white man living outside of society in harmony with nature. Chingachgook is an Indian living outside of society in harmony with nature. Deerslayer and Chingachgook are brothers. In a mythical West that has sprung from the imagination of Europeans, the American as natural man can live in harmony with his brother, the Indian, as natural man. But what happens when the Europeans, as men of history, come to take the West away from Indians who are also men of history? Then there will be wars, the inevitable clash between two historical cultures. And Deerslayer and Chingachgook must lose their freedom and innocence in these wars. Cooper, it would appear, is aware that the myth is of European origin and he is aware that the myth must change in response to historical events. The myth is a prisoner of time; it is a prisoner of the historical culture which gave it birth.

The action of the novel takes place at the beginning of the great struggle between England and France for the control of the West. English pioneers are wresting the frontier from the French and the Indian. Since the myth is a product of English culture, it will be used by Englishmen in their war of conquest. Deerslayer is caught in time; he does not dwell in the free space of total possibility. He has no choice but to fight for Anglo-Americans against the French and Indians. The dramatic turning point in the novel is reached, therefore, when Deerslayer loses his innocence by killing a man—an Indian—for the first time, in defense of the Hutter family. Vainly he tries to avoid conflict but he has to keep the canoe, which is the key to the safety of the family on the lake, out of the hands of the attacking Indians. Finally, the fulfillment of this act of social commitment forces him to kill the Indian who threatens to capture the canoe. It is the dying Indian who informs Deerslayer that he has lost his innocence. Deerslayer, he says, "That good name for boy—poor name for warrior . . . . eye sartain—finger lightning—aim, death—great warrior soon. No Deerslayer—Hawkeye—Hawkeye—Hawkeye." Here the man and the myth have lost their innocence. The myth must abandon nature and become a man as Hawkeye fights for English culture against the Indian.

We meet Leatherstocking next in *The Last of the Mohicans*. He is a soldier of the king. He is without innocence. The Deerslayer who could

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bring himself to kill a man only with the greatest reluctance is now Hawkeye, efficient, methodical, terrible killer of Indians. At the opening of the novel when Major Heyward brings an Indian scout into camp who is a Huron in background, Hawkeye warns against the Indian.

" 'Think you so?' said Heyward, 'I confess I have not been without my own suspicions.'

" 'I knew he was one of the cheats as soon as I laid eyes on him!' returned the scout, 'This thief is leaning against the foot of the sugar sapling that you can see over them bushes; his right leg is in line with the bark of the tree, and . . . I can take him from where I stand between the ankle and the knee.'

" 'It will not do.' [said Heyward] 'He may be innocent, and I dislike the act.' "

Hawkeye is the coldblooded frontier fighter who will shoot first and ask questions later. The English professional soldier supplies the restraint and innocence in the scene.

The purpose of this novel, as the sequel of the first, is to demonstrate the continued destruction of the myth by the demands of history. The first novel dramatized Deerslayer's loss of innocence. *The Last of the Mohicans* dramatized the death of the myth as it found symbolic expression in the noble savage. Chingachgook, the Indian as myth, like Deerslayer, has been forced to fight for the English culture which has created him. His son, Uncas, now carries the mythical mantle of innocence which his father has surrendered in joining Hawkeye as a hardened soldier. Uncas and the white girl, Cora, fall in love. If the myth of the American Adam, stripped of the burden of history and standing in that unbounded space which offers boundless possibilities, obtained as reality, then there should be no barrier to the marriage of these two children of nature. But Cooper does present a barrier, that of history.

Englishmen are not the children of nature; they are conquerors who will impose their culture on the continent. And the Indians are not the children of nature; they are the defenders of their own culture, of their own way of life. When the English will have defeated the French, then the only barrier between them and the West will be the Indian. When the Indian is seen as the last barrier to the conquest and exploitation of the frontier, white men will no longer be able to believe in the myth of the noble savage. It is only right, therefore, that Uncas, the last of the Mohicans, the last of the noble savages, shall die with the defeat of the French. And it is only right that he should be killed by Magua. Magua is an Indian of history; he hates the white man for destroying the Indian culture. When he desires Cora, he does so like an Indian; he wants her as

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an Indian squaw, as the subservient, obedient female of the Indian way of life. Dramatically, Cooper reveals the way in which Anglo-American culture will define the Indian after the French and Indian War. The Indian will be Magua, the eternally defiant Magua, who will fling his curses and his tomahawk at the white man who crosses the mountains into the Garden of the World. After 1760, the Indian can only be defined as the barbaric opponent of the spread of Anglo-American civilization westward.

The defeat of France has opened the Ohio and Mississippi valleys to Anglo-American culture. Continuing to place the Adamic myth within the development of history, Cooper now presents Leatherstocking as the Pathfinder who will lead the Europeans into the Garden of the World. According to the Americans of 1830, this area of the Midwest presented a different kind of nature than that of the east coast. For Cooper's contemporaries, European culture had been able to make a beachhead along the Atlantic. The virgin land of the coastal colonies had not been able to redeem Europeans and to make them into that new man, the innocent American. But for the Jacksonians, when settlers went across the Appalachian Mountains, geography mastered and destroyed their heritage of European civilization and left them free from history to live in harmony with nature.

And as Cooper presents Leatherstocking in *The Pathfinder*, the man as myth makes his great effort to escape from the Anglo-American culture which has robbed him of his freedom. Pathfinder dreams of giving up his life as a soldier to return to innocence. But the myth is still being defined by history. It is here in the Mississippi Valley that people are to live in harmony in a new kind of society, a society without the complexities and weaknesses of civilization, a natural society. Such a society demanded the union of Adam with an Eve in domesticity surrounded by descendants.

Pathfinder, who is now specifically identified as Adam by Cooper, is willing to accept this responsibility to marry and become the archetypical father for a uniquely natural community. Cooper demonstrates, however, that Pathfinder has led human beings committed to historical society into the new West. There is no mythical Eve to complement the willing Adam. Pathfinder falls in love with Mabel but Mabel will not, indeed, she cannot give up civilization to marry the frontiersman. It is Pathfinder himself who tells the reader that the match should not take place because he recognizes that he is not like other human beings, that he is a species apart. When Mabel finally says, "Pathfinder—dear Pathfinder, under-

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bring himself to kill a man only with the greatest reluctance is now Hawkeye, efficient, methodical, terrible killer of Indians. At the opening of the novel when Major Heyward brings an Indian scout into camp who is a Huron in background, Hawkeye warns against the Indian.

" 'Think you so?' said Heyward, 'I confess I have not been without my own suspicions.'

" 'I knew he was one of the cheats as soon as I laid eyes on him!' returned the scout, 'This thief is leaning against the foot of the sugar sapling that you can see over them bushes; his right leg is in line with the bark of the tree, and . . . I can take him from where I stand between the ankle and the knee.'

" 'It will not do.' [said Heyward] 'He may be innocent, and I dislike the act.' "

Hawkeye is the coldblooded frontier fighter who will shoot first and ask questions later. The English professional soldier supplies the restraint and innocence in the scene.

The purpose of this novel, as the sequel of the first, is to demonstrate the continued destruction of the myth by the demands of history. The first novel dramatized Deerslayer's loss of innocence. *The Last of the Mohicans* dramatized the death of the myth as it found symbolic expression in the noble savage. Chingachgook, the Indian as myth, like Deerslayer, has been forced to fight for the English culture which has created him. His son, Uncas, now carries the mythical mantle of innocence which his father has surrendered in joining Hawkeye as a hardened soldier. Uncas and the white girl, Cora, fall in love. If the myth of the American Adam, stripped of the burden of history and standing in that unbounded space which offers boundless possibilities, obtained as reality, then there should be no barrier to the marriage of these two children of nature. But Cooper does present a barrier, that of history.

Englishmen are not the children of nature; they are conquerors who will impose their culture on the continent. And the Indians are not the children of nature; they are the defenders of their own culture, of their own way of life. When the English will have defeated the French, then the only barrier between them and the West will be the Indian. When the Indian is seen as the last barrier to the conquest and exploitation of the frontier, white men will no longer be able to believe in the myth of the noble savage. It is only right, therefore, that Uncas, the last of the Mohicans, the last of the noble savages, shall die with the defeat of the French. And it is only right that he should be killed by Magua. Magua is an Indian of history; he hates the white man for destroying the Indian culture. When he desires Cora, he does so like an Indian; he wants her as

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an Indian squaw, as the subservient, obedient female of the Indian way of life. Dramatically, Cooper reveals the way in which Anglo-American culture will define the Indian after the French and Indian War. The Indian will be Magua, the eternally defiant Magua, who will fling his curses and his tomahawk at the white man who crosses the mountains into the Garden of the World. After 1760, the Indian can only be defined as the barbaric opponent of the spread of Anglo-American civilization westward.

The defeat of France has opened the Ohio and Mississippi valleys to Anglo-American culture. Continuing to place the Adamic myth within the development of history, Cooper now presents Leatherstocking as the Pathfinder who will lead the Europeans into the Garden of the World. According to the Americans of 1830, this area of the Midwest presented a different kind of nature than that of the east coast. For Cooper's contemporaries, European culture had been able to make a beachhead along the Atlantic. The virgin land of the coastal colonies had not been able to redeem Europeans and to make them into that new man, the innocent American. But for the Jacksonians, when settlers went across the Appalachian Mountains, geography mastered and destroyed their heritage of European civilization and left them free from history to live in harmony with nature.

And as Cooper presents Leatherstocking in *The Pathfinder,* the man as myth makes his great effort to escape from the Anglo-American culture which has robbed him of his freedom. Pathfinder dreams of giving up his life as a soldier to return to innocence. But the myth is still being defined by history. It is here in the Mississippi Valley that people are to live in harmony in a new kind of society, a society without the complexities and weaknesses of civilization, a natural society. Such a society demanded the union of Adam with an Eve in domesticity surrounded by descendants.

Pathfinder, who is now specifically identified as Adam by Cooper, is willing to accept this responsibility to marry and become the archetypical father for a uniquely natural community. Cooper demonstrates, however, that Pathfinder has led human beings committed to historical society into the new West. There is no mythical Eve to complement the willing Adam. Pathfinder falls in love with Mabel but Mabel will not, indeed, she cannot give up civilization to marry the frontiersman. It is Pathfinder himself who tells the reader that the match should not take place because he recognizes that he is not like other human beings, that he is a species apart. When Mabel finally says, "Pathfinder—dear Pathfinder, under-

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stand me . . . a match like that would be unwise—unnatural, perhaps," Leatherstocking immediately agrees, "Yes, unnat'ral—agin natur."

And Cooper obviously hopes that he is driving home a moral to the American people. He has Pathfinder cry out, "What a creature is a mortal man! Never satisfied with his own gifts, but forever craving that which Providence denies!" The American people long to escape history and live with nature like the Pathfinder. But Cooper presents the Leatherstocking as an incomplete being; nature is no substitute for what God has given man: the possibility of love and families and civilization. The utter loneliness of Pathfinder, his longing for the society in which he can never dwell, is given beautiful expression by Cooper in Pathfinder's dream where he tries to exchange physical nature for human companionship: "I imagined I had a cabin in a grove of sugar maples, and at the root of every tree was a Mabel Dunham, while the birds sang ballads, instead of the notes that natur' gave."

Clearly the moral of this novel is that Americans need humility, that they need to accept their humanity and frailty. Cooper wanted to teach them that they could never escape from history.

The next novel in the life cycle of Leatherstocking, *The Pioneers,* is an extended elaboration of this point that Americans can never escape from history. With the establishment of an independent nation, free from political connection with the British Empire, it was possible for the people of the United States to assert that they had cut their cultural ties with the parent nation. It was possible for Americans to claim that, while England was connected to history, America was built on nature. It was possible to believe that a new kind of civilization, one without historical roots, had been established in the new world.

Deerslayer was the mythical embodiment of this philosophy which described Europe in terms of historical time and America in terms of physical space. But, Cooper was to argue, how can Americans justify their cultural independence from England on the strength of a myth that is English in origin? The dramatic role of Leatherstocking in *The Pioneers,* therefore, is to unite American and English culture and Cooper reminds his readers that Leatherstocking, the man as myth, is loyal to the historical culture which gave him his identity.

Approaching Cooper from the traditional viewpoint that he is celebrating, not criticizing, the myth of virgin land, Henry Nash Smith has noted an element of ambiguity in *The Pioneers.* Cooper, he declares, is presenting a case in favor of civilization when he has Judge Temple speak philosophically to his daughter who has come to the defense of Leatherstocking, guilty of hunting out of season, "Thou hast reason, Bess, and

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much of it, too, but thy heart lies too near thy head. . . . Say what thou wilt to the poor old man; give scope to the feelings of thy warm heart; but try to remember, Elizabeth, that the laws alone remove us from the condition of the savage; that he has been criminal, and that his judge was thy father."

Professor Smith has interpreted the drama of the novel then as the ambiguity between Cooper's commitment to the values of nature symbolized by Leatherstocking and the values of civilization symbolized by Judge Temple. But the drama of the novel revolves around the reconciliation of the American, Judge Temple, and the Englishman, Major Effingham, a reconciliation which reaches fulfillment in the marriage of Oliver Effingham and Elizabeth Temple. There seems little doubt in Cooper's mind that the values of Judge Temple are superior to those of Leatherstocking. Indeed, the old man is presented as a decrepit myth which survives only through the indulgence of the Judge.

If Leatherstocking as Pathfinder has failed to become the archetype of the pioneers, Judge Temple is so represented here in *The Pioneers.* Leatherstocking was the myth which promised that the American pioneers would be Adams and Eves who might step out of time to live in nature's unbounded spaciousness. But in place of the Utopian settlement which Pathfinder could not establish is that which Judge Temple has built. And Judge Temple is a man of civilization who is bringing complex culture, an historical heritage to the frontier. He is the man of law because the men and women who came west to live in his community are frail and imperfect human beings who need the law to control their evil and their selfishness. Nature cannot redeem them; indeed, these people would quickly destroy nature if the law did not restrain them and in turn give protection to nature.

Judge Temple and Leatherstocking debate this issue. Natty Bumppo, still the embodiment of the myth, argues that man can live in harmony with nature only if he can approach it in a completely free and spontaneous way without the interference of law. Judge Temple makes the counter-argument that given a human nature which is always self-seeking and avaricious, men will quickly ravage physical nature if it is not protected by law. For Cooper, society on the frontier is like all societies, self-destructive unless restrained and governed by enlightened and disinterested men who uphold the law.

Understanding that Leatherstocking represents an ideal of nature which, although it is erroneous, has dignity, Judge Temple tolerates and even protects the aging myth. It is not the Judge's upholding of the law which ultimately drives Natty Bumppo out of the community, rather it

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is the lawless mob which has no respect for Leatherstocking's need for privacy and isolation. It is as if the people must mock and harry the fading myth which has failed to redeem them. Indeed, the lingering presence of Leatherstocking with his superior virtue and purity infuriates the people who cannot rise to his level of behavior.

But the most important role of Leatherstocking in *The Pioneers* is to facilitate the reconciliation of Judge Temple and Major Effingham, to facilitate the reconciliation of American and English culture, to facilitate the understanding of Americans for their historical traditions.

The novel begins with Leatherstocking living in isolation with Chingachgook and a mysterious young man, Oliver Edwards. Together they carry on still more mysterious activities on a nearby mountain. Finally, we are to learn that Leatherstocking and Oliver have been caring for an old man who has been dwelling underground in a cave; an old man who is Major Effingham, Natty Bumppo's English commander from the French and Indian wars. Major Effingham, who had purchased extensive lands on the frontier, had remained loyal to the Crown when the Revolution began. He had then put his lands into trust with Judge Temple, an American patriot. At the conclusion of the Revolution, Effingham assumed that with independence Americans had repudiated all ties with those who had remained loyal to England and that the legal right to his lands was in jeopardy. He assumed that Judge Temple would be motivated by lawless self-interest. The Judge, however, as a conservator of civilization had preserved his trust and is searching for Effingham or his heirs.

Out of the purging flames of a fire which sweeps over the mountain, there comes the reconciliation of patriot and loyalist as Oliver Edwards, the Major's grandson, and Elizabeth Temple discover their love and the dying Major and Judge Temple are brought together.

Cooper does not trust, however, to the subtlety of his contemporaries to understand the symbolism of reunion and continuity with the past. He will become even more explicit about the role of Natty Bumppo in bringing together American and English culture. Did the readers understand that Deerslayer had become a soldier of the king? That the myth had been used by Englishmen to steel the nerve and arms of their invading force? Now even as Major Effingham, the last direct symbol of English culture, lies dying in America, so Leatherstocking, who has served the English conquerors so well, has lost his vitality and is withering away. His final constructive achievement is to keep his commander alive until his rightful claim to be a part of the American frontier is recognized. And Cooper will not merely suggest the commander and follower

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relationship, he will spell it out in literal form, graven in the granite of Major Effingham's tombstone for all future Americans to see as the evidence of the relationship of the myth to the English heritage.

The weeping Leatherstocking is led to the grave where his finger eagerly traces the letters as Oliver Effingham reads to the illiterate frontiersman:

" 'Sacred to the memory of Oliver Effiingham, Esquire, formerly a major in his B. Majesty's 60th Foot; a soldier of tried valor; a subject of chivalrous loyalty; and a man of honesty. To these virtues he added the graces of a Christian. The morning of his life was spent in honor, wealth, and power; but its evening was obscured by poverty, neglect, and disease, which were alleviated only by the tender care of his old, faithful, and upright friend and attendant, Nathaniel Bumppo. His descendants rear this stone to the virtues of the master, and to the enduring gratitude of the servant.'

"The Leatherstocking stared at the sound of his own name, and a smile of joy illumined his wrinkled features, as he said—

" 'And did ye say it, lad? Have you then got the old man's name cut in the stone, by the side of his master's? God bless ye, children! 'Twas a kind thought, and kindness goes to the heart as life shortens.' "

Leatherstocking now leaves at the end of the novel for the unsettled frontier. On his first trip to the area of virgin land as the Pathfinder, he had turned back because he could not serve as the father of settlement. The myth had failed to fulfill itself; it could not separate itself from the historical culture which had brought it into existence. And so Leatherstocking returned to the real father of settlement, Judge Temple. Here he could play the constructive role of illuminating the relationship of American and English society. If the myth could not separate itself from historical culture, it could clarify its relationship to that history and demonstrate that it was a tradition which united America to the past. Having revealed, however, that America was to be defined in terms of history and time and not in terms of unbounded space, what future and function did the myth now have?

When Leatherstocking set out for the unsettled areas of the West as an old and withered figure in the 1790s, he could not go hoping for fulfillment. That hope had been crushed a generation before in *The Pathfinder*. Leatherstocking, alone, might still find harmony with nature but he could not found a new society. And any harmony which he found with nature must be temporary because Leatherstocking was a prisoner of time. Human settlement constantly overran the virgin land which had given him strength and as the area of unspoiled nature shrank, Leather-

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stocking, in turn, withered away. But as long as there was an unsettled area, Americans would continue to believe in the myth that they might escape history to live with nature. Leatherstocking could not perish as long as there was a last frontier.

It is with sadness and resignation then that the old man sets out for the West to spend his last few remaining days. He knows that these days are numbered because inevitably settlers will come to the virgin land and when there was no more land without human habitation, there would be no more myth. The stage is carefully set for the final novel of the series, *The Prairie*.

The myth, for Cooper, must end with settlement because the settlers will be human; they will carry disharmony engraved indelibly in their hearts; they will have all the human weakness that the first frontier Adam and Eve, Hurry Harry and Judith, had demonstrated in *Deerslayer*. It is difficult to visualize how Cooper could have provided greater dramatic emphasis to this point than by painting the picture of the Ishmael Bush family which is the first invader of Leatherstocking's last refuge. Here is vulgarity and brutality in its most exaggerated form.

Cooper's literary art reaches its highest level when he brings the Bush family and Leatherstocking to their first confrontation which has the dramatic implication of Leatherstocking's doom and the death of the myth. Bursting with crude vitality, the Bush family is pushing westward toward their evening camp when suddenly out of the setting sun there grew a fantastic apparition: "The sun had fallen below the crest of the nearest wave of the prairie, leaving the usual rich and glowing train on its track. In the center of this flood of fiery light, a human form appeared, drawn against the gilded background as distinctly, and, seemingly as palpable, as though it would come within the grasp of any extended hand. The figure was colossal; the attitude musing and melancholy, and the situation directly in the route of the travellers. But imbedded, as it was, in its setting of garish light, it was impossible to distinguish its just proportions or true character."

Brilliantly, Cooper has captured the situation of the myth. Only in the setting sun of the western prairie does Leatherstocking promise to be larger than life. And when the family comes to see the reality as the sun sets and shadows creep across the prairie, all they find is a peculiarly withered, almost mummified, old man.

If the myth has come to the final frontier to accept its fate, it is, nevertheless, no longer innocent. It is as if Leatherstocking, through his human suffering in the death of Major Effingham, has achieved a bond of understanding and sympathy with mankind that makes him a spokesman

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for the superiority of civilization to nature. A myth that embodies nature, he cannot choose to live in civilization. But he can warn those who would attempt to flee from civilization to turn back to accept their human responsibility. He can demonstrate, in the withering of his own body, the fallacy of the American belief in the unrestricted possibilities for men in the unbounded spaciousness of nature. There is no escape from the cycle of life and death, no escape from the ravages of time.

Again Cooper has skillfully used imagery to drive home his point. The action of this final novel takes place during Jefferson's administrations. The President has dispatched Lewis and Clark to explore the vast territories acquired in the Louisiana Purchase. The nation has hopes that this tremendous area will guarantee redemptive contact with nature for generations to come. But Cooper has placed the aging Leatherstocking on this new land, which the author describes as a dry and almost lifeless desert, the perfect physical complement of the dessicated hunter.

And Leatherstocking, who in *The Pioneers* still argued against Judge Temple's advocacy of conservation, of the use of law to preserve nature, now thinks back in agony to the irresponsible rape of the virgin land:

"What the world of America is coming to, and where the machinations and inventions of its people are to have an end, the Lord, He only knows. . . . How much has the beauty of the wilderness been deformed in two short lives. . . . I often think the Lord has placed this barren belt of prairie behind the States, to warn men to what their folly may yet bring the land."

Leatherstocking now realizes that harmony, whatever harmony exists, comes not spontaneously from nature; it comes painfully from human effort; it is imposed by human law. "The law—'tis bad to have it, but, I sometimes think, it is worse to be entirely without it . . . . yes—yes, the law is needed."

To dramatize this point, Cooper returns to the first settlers of this last frontier. The family of Ishmael Bush, coarse, disharmonious, evil, has come to the West to escape the law. As with Hurry Harry and Judith, as with all settlers, they will not be spontaneously redeemed by nature; they will not have a rebirth; they will not become innocent. But Ishmael Bush does grow in moral stature. Gradually, he comes to accept the moral implications of his role as head of this first family. He is the head of a new society and that society cannot exist without human justice and human law. Ishmael Bush begins to be transformed when he accepts the necessity of punishing the murderer who is part of his family. Even in the middle of an unsettled desert, man achieves dignity only through the law.

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As the last days of Leatherstocking grow near, there has appeared on the prairie Lt. Duncan Uncas Middleton, a representative of the eastern aristocracy; he is the last link between the fading myth and its parent culture; he will make it possible for Leatherstocking to perish in peace, secure in the knowledge that his memory will be honored.

It was true, as Leatherstocking remarked: "I am without kith or kin in the wide world . . . when I am gone, there will be an end of my race."

The myth could not find embodiment in society and now, with the end of the frontier, it must disappear. But the myth would find after-life among the eastern aristocracy; tradition within an historical society does not die. The ancient hunter had been brought to tears of happiness as Lt. Middleton had recounted how his grandfather, Major Middleton of the British Army, had taught his children to revere the memory of the noble savage, as represented by Uncas, and the frontiersman, Hawkeye. Our grandfather, Duncan related, taught us that " 'Unlike most of those who live a border life, he [Leatherstocking] united the better, instead of the worst, qualities. . . . He was a man endowed with the choicest and perhaps rarest gift of nature; that of distinguishing good from evil. His virtues were those of simplicity. . . . In short, he was a noble shoot from the stock of human nature, which never could attain its proper elevation and importance, for no other reason than because it grew in the forest; such, old hunter, were the very words of my grandfather . . . . there are already three among us who have also names derived from that scout.'

" 'A name, did you say?' exclaimed the old man, 'what, the name of the solitary, unl'arned hunter? Do the great, and the rich, and the honored, and, what is better still, the just, do they bear his very, actual name?' "

Assured that his memory will be preserved in living tradition, Leatherstocking can die happily. Here is the final evidence that Cooper did not intend his hero to exist outside of time. Leatherstocking is happy because he will be embedded in time forever, his name will be passed from one generation to another.

As befitting a myth of nature, Leatherstocking does not die as a man. The rituals of Christian civilization have no meaning in his last hours. The spirit of the myth will leave its earthly abode to follow the setting sun westward forever:

"The trapper was placed on a rude seat, which had been made, with studied care, to support his frame in an upright and easy attitude. . . . His body was placed so as to let the light of the setting sun fall full upon the solemn features. . . . The trapper had remained nearly motionless for an hour. His eyes alone had occasionally opened and shut. When

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opened, his gaze seemed fastened on the clouds which hung around the western horizon. . . . Suddenly . . . Middleton felt the hand which he held grasp his own with incredible power, and the old man, supported on either side by his friends, rose upright to his feet. For a moment he looked about him . . . and then . . . he pronounced the word—'Here!' "

For Cooper it was here on the great plains, during Jefferson's administrations, that the myth of the frontier perished because of the penetration of the last unknown territories by human beings who, by their very presence, destroyed the mysterious potential of the virgin land. In the words of Professor Lewis, there no longer existed "space as spaciousness, as the unbounded, the area of total possibility." And from the first moment when Deerslayer was forced to participate in the disharmony of history, Cooper had prepared for this moment. The five Leatherstocking novels are a sustained argument against the autonomous existence of an American Adam. Inexorably, Cooper has forced the myth to live within the historical rhythm of the Anglo-American culture which had created it. Just as this society has a history from 1740 to 1800, so Leatherstocking has a parallel history.

We must disagree, therefore, with the agreement of Professor Lewis with D. H. Lawrence. It is true that Cooper wrote *Deerslayer* after the four other novels of the series. But surely the theme of these five novels is the absolute opposite of Lawrence's contention that "The Leatherstocking novels . . . go backwards from old age to golden youth. That is the true myth of America. She starts old, old, wrinkled and writhing in an old skin. And there is a gradual sloughing off of the old skin, towards a new youth. It is the myth of America."

It is indeed the myth of America. And we must conclude, therefore, that Cooper intended, deliberately intended, to destroy the myth of America, to take it from the freshness of youth to its end, old, old and wrinkled on the last American frontier.

Afternote

This article is a still further exploration of the place of primitivism in the American imagination. It is the beginning of a book-length manuscript which explores the response of American novelists, from Cooper to the present, to the national faith that the European, in stepping out of Old World culture, is reborn in the New World as a child of nature. In my book, *Historians Against History* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1965), I had discovered that our most important historians have used and continue to use this myth of rebirth as the foundation of their historical explanation. If this essay on Cooper is compared with my chapter on George Bancroft, the great historical apolo-

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gist for Jacksonian democracy, it will be seen that Cooper is almost systematically refuting Bancroft point by point. So far in my explorations in the American novel, I have found many novelists who share Cooper's criticism of the myth. There are many novelists, however, who accept the myth as reality. But most of them, unlike the historians, believe that the Jeffersonian Arcadia is lost, that the myth is no longer the reality of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century America.

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A Political Movement: Progressivism



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David W. Noble

The Paradox of Progressive Thought

PROGRESS, for the average American of the nineteenth century, was a law whose validity was beyond doubt. During the first decade and a half of the next—our present—century, this deep-rooted affirmation reached a high point of intensity, calling forth an emotional and intellectual enthusiasm that has indelibly labeled these years as the Progressive Era. Then, suddenly and without warning, the tragedy of World War I burst upon this generation and amidst the smoke of battle, the Progressive Era vanished. Seldom, if ever, has there been such a sharp and clear division of periods in American history as there was between that of the Progressive Era and that which succeeded it. Americans continued and have continued to believe in progress but the assurance, the certainty, and the close identification of this idea with a total moral reawakening have gradually receded.

An explanation for the decline of the idea of progress in our time has not been difficult to suggest. For Americans, the nineteenth century was in general a continuation of previous centuries based on a pattern of life basically agrarian. When industrialism first impinged upon this situation, it did not call up the picture of complex and difficult problems; rather it presented vistas of untold progress. It was only later, in the twentieth century, when industrialism and urbanism had reached epic proportions that the curtain of promises was lifted somewhat to reveal the specter of inescapable problems lurking backstage. The simplicity of conditions that had fostered faith in progress had disappeared and with their disappearance went the naive belief in the inevitability of progress. When thinking of this process by which Americans were divested of their innocence

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and faith, it is convenient to take World War I as the symbolic opening moment, a sharp and harsh beginning but only the beginning, for major ideas are not obliterated by a single historical event.

But the recent American past contains no more interesting phenomenon than the fact that many of the leading thinkers of the Progressive movement were destroyed in effectiveness during the extraordinarily short time of the six years from 1914 to 1920. Men who were leaders in molding public opinion to the outbreak of the War were now, in the post-war years, inarticulate, unable to reach or understand the new generation.

This phenomenon presents a problem of explanation, not in terms of a general eroding of ideas by the slow emergence of unpleasant and unforeseen currents out of the main stream of the new industrial civilization, but of a swift and immediate and total smashing of a thought pattern, so that a group of men who before the first World War believed that they were in absolute control of the situation were reduced in six years to a frank bewilderment, to an inability to grasp the world around them. The road that must be followed in searching for an explanation to this problem has its beginning in the very nature of the breakdown: in its rapidity and completeness.

Recently there have been analyses of Frederick Jackson Turner and Vernon Parrington in the *American Quarterly*.[1] In both cases it was suggested that these liberals who lived through the Progressive Era had formulated theories of democracy largely from nineteenth-century American agrarian ideas, ideas which consequently were incompatible with the fact of the new industrial civilization. While Turner compromised somewhat with his original theories and while Parrington was prepared to write in a pessimistic vein, this was not the case with most Progressive thinkers and this is the clue to an understanding of our problem.

Men in society seldom, if ever, gladly accept fundamental changes that destroy the basic habits, forms, institutions, and ideas of their culture. From the Civil War to World War I, America did undergo a period of change that brought about just such overturnings. Considered as a mass movement, Progressivism was a response of the average man to this challenge to his accustomed status; much of Progressive sentiment was clearly directed toward regaining the "good old days." But the predominant social thinkers of this movement, while highlighting attendant abuses, accepted the fact of the new industrial forces; indeed they more than accepted, they waxed elo-

[1]Henry Nash Smith, "The Frontier Hypothesis and the Myth of the West," *American Quarterly*, II (Spring 1950), 3-11; Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr., "Parrington and the Decline of American Liberalism," *American Quarterly*, III (Winter 1951), 295-308.

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quent concerning the promise of the future under the guidance of these new forces.

Questions immediately arise: What did industrialism mean to these men? What was the basis of their acceptance of its value and promise? Born in the placid stability of mid-nineteenth-century America, they had reached manhood in a period of utmost social change and confusion, yet they confidently foretold the future in the brightest of promises. Did these men fail to react in confusion or disgust as had Turner and Parrington to the new forces because they really grasped their reality, or was their effervescent optimism based on a fragile sublimation of reality to theories absorbed in the same intellectual environment that had produced Turner and Parrington?

The beliefs in democracy and progress held by Turner and Parrington have their roots in the eighteenth century. Here is the source of the primitivism that formed the foundation of their suspicion of the complexities of society and their glorification of the self-sufficient individual. For, in general, the idea of Progress held during the Enlightenment was paradoxically primitivistic.[2] Man, according to this theory, would progress forward by discovering laws that had existed at the beginning of time; he would progress forward by discarding the mistakes that were embodied in the complexity and confusion of social habits and institutions; he would progress forward by recasting his society according to a few primitivistic rules.

The structure of this vision had its inspiration from Descartes, but equally important for its existence was the psychology of Locke that had postulated human nature in the atomistic terms necessary to justify an escape from the insidious ties of the contemporary society. Before the theory of evolution destroyed the physics and metaphysics of Descartes, new views of psychology first made prominent by the conservative historicists of the early nineteenth century were undermining the Lockean ideas. By denying the atomistic basis of human nature, by postulating instead that human nature is a social product, these writers firmly stated that there could be no escape to any social standards other than those to which the individual was born. Finally, in the late nineteenth century, for those who were not influenced by these changes in ideas, the indisputable fact of increasing complexity inherent in the new industrial civilization made impossible this vision of progress through a return to a primitive state of simple and harmonious law—made impossible, that is, if ideas were mechanical or mathematical entities to be added and subtracted with rigid precision. But if one accepted the idea that man is a social product, if one ac-

[2]See especially Lois Whitney, *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1934).

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cepted a theory of evolution, if one further accepted the fact of the increasing complexity of civilization, and then if one fitted these views to the deep and abiding belief that progress is still the achievement of the simple and harmonious order that had existed at the beginning of time, then one need not reach the impasse of a Turner or a Parrington, then it would be possible to snatch triumph from disaster by seeing industrialism as the means for achieving the primitive utopia.

It is fitting that one of the first appearances of this peculiar pattern of ideas can be found in the writings of Henry Demarest Lloyd, who is best known as the first of the muckrakers. Born almost at mid-century, in 1847, Lloyd, while at Columbia University, revealed an early sensitiveness to the new material forces transforming American life, and he reached eagerly for new ideas that would bring an understanding of them. Poised and self-assured, eager and enthusiastic, a journalist and above all a crusader for the underdog, Lloyd, the gifted amateur philosopher, has left his ideas scattered throughout his notebooks and other writings without regard for system. The consistency of these fragments reveals, however, that Lloyd followed unwaveringly several central themes when he speculated about progress.

As early as 1879, he had written that the "Constitutional Era for which Jefferson wrote is near its end. New departures need a new political philosophy."[3] What Lloyd had in mind as he penned these lines was the following situation: an economic revolution had occurred that had destroyed the preëxisting agrarian and artisan society. In the course of this upheaval, the social relations on which social values rested were destroyed . . . with the result that the present generation was wandering confused and bewildered, without guidance from any standard of ethics. A moral anarchy had been created in which men treated other men as commodities rather than as human beings. Moreover the anarchy was destroying democracy because it was dissolving the homogeneity, the ability of the people to act together on important issues.[4]

The situation, however, in Lloyd's analysis was not hopeless. The remedy was a reformulation of the theory of democracy and an acceptance by the people of this reformulation. To accomplish this, the old individualistic definition of democracy must be discarded. While it was true that American democracy had been developed to a large degree by the frontier, frontier conditions had now disappeared: "Our young men can no longer go West; they must go up or down. Not new land, but new virtue must be the outlet for the future. . . . We

[3]Henry Demarest Lloyd, Lloyd Manuscripts (Madison, Wisconsin), Box 20, Typescript Notebook A (1879), p. 11.

[4]Lloyd, *Man the Social Creator* (New York: Doubleday, 1906).

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cannot hereafter, as in the past, recover freedom by going to the prairies; we must find it in the society of the good."[5]

Before pointing the way to such an achievement, Lloyd faced the problem of dispelling the prestige of Herbert Spencer's scientific fatalism. He had to demonstrate that progress was not the result of inexorable natural law, but the product of human volition. To accomplish this, Lloyd turned eagerly to the theories of the historicists and to the theory of evolution. His guiding thought became the belief that the "same revolution must take place in Political Economy as has been made in law by Sir Henry Maine. No such universal law as Ricardo claimed; no such perfected structure as Lowe's; no body of revealed truth—infallible guide of conduct on one hand, and prophesying on the other the future."[6] Man must be free to make his own future, and to be free, he must realize that "There is no truth. It is to be made. There is no absolute truth, final, and never will be. There will be whatever truth is created, as music is created, more truth beyond to be not discovered but manufactured."[7]

If, said Lloyd, one understood the implications of the new theories of history and evolution, it became obvious that those who identified Spencer and science to gain prestige for conservative ideas were mistaken. " 'Scientific,' " wrote Lloyd in scathing tones, "is the word conceitedly arrogated to themselves by the dull people who assume that they know the laws of currency, trade, and the other departments of social economy, and quote these laws against every proposal of reform."[8] But, he affirmed: "There is no surer test of the title of scholars to be called cultivated, than whether they have mastered the fact that in social science the 'laws' that rule men are the laws that men make. . . . No man is scientific who does not grasp the truth that the 'laws' of currency, employment, wealth change as the ideas and ideals of men change. . . . The only true science is that which listens even in political economy to the whispers of the poet and the reformer, and classifies that which IS only as a bridge between that which was and that which is to be."[9]

Once Americans had grasped that they were free to save themselves, the next step would be to have them understand what the basic theory of democracy should be. They had thought of democracy in negative and individualistic terms and, in consequence, were standing helpless before the new economic forces. Democracy, wrote Lloyd, if it were to

[5]Lloyd, *Lords of Industry* (New York: Putnam, 1910), p. 147.
[6]Lloyd, Lloyd Manuscripts, Box 21, Typescript Small Notebook B (1881), p. 14.
[7]Lloyd, Lloyd Manuscripts, Box 20, Typescript Card notes, p. 146.
[8]Lloyd, *Man the Social Creator*, p. 220.
[9]*Ibid.*, pp. 220-21.

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survive, must be seen as positive and social. Again he turned to theoretical developments from the ideas of the critics of the Enlightenment. Democracy, he stated, must be based on the principle that ". . . there is a people, and it is as different from a mere juxtaposition of persons as a globe of glass from the handful of sand out of which it was melted."[10]

The dangers of class divisions could be ended if the people grasped that democracy meant community coöperation and planning, if they grasped that this was the true meaning of democracy as it fitted these facts of human nature: that the individual was a social animal and that social solidarity was a reality. Dark as were the present abuses of industrialism, stubborn and shortsighted as were the people, Lloyd did not, could not, visualize himself in the rôle of a Jeremiah. His task, his mission, was that of a harbinger of good tidings—out of the blackness would come light. The people must fight to save themselves, but it was a battle they could not lose.

The keys to this optimism are Lloyd's conception of the social nature of man and the relation of the industrial revolution to this nature. The believers in progress and primitivism of the eighteenth century had never been able to explain satisfactorily the existence of historical evil. If the individual was good, why had he degenerated? If he had been corrupted by society, why could he suddenly escape and regain his pristine state? If it were now revealed, however, that man in the primitive state was not an isolated and self-sufficient being but a social animal and if one accepted the nineteenth-century theories of history and evolution, then a different story might be unfolded. Men in close association, declared Lloyd, must love each other; it was the law of their social nature.[11] Thus, at the beginning of human history, there were groups of men living in perfect harmony under this primal law of love. In these perfect and primitive societies, we have the model which all society must strive to achieve. Through the ages this goal was frustrated by the fact that these associations had no real contact with each other. Lack of contact meant lack of love and so man's history has been a long series of bloody struggles between mutually suspicious groups. With the first effects of industrialism, the unity within the local groups was broken, creating the same kind of moral anarchy within the groups as had existed between them. But in breaking up the old groups, the new economic forces were ushering in a millennium, for men were being driven into close association, not on a local, but on a world-wide scale. These forces

[10]Lloyd, *Wealth vs. Commonwealth* (New York: Harper, 1894), p. 497.
[11]Lloyd, *Man the Social Creator*, Chapter III.

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were creating a world-wide community marked by close association; they were creating an environment where love must be supreme.[12]

Earlier Lloyd had spoken in almost relativistic terms. Truth was relative to the situation in which man found himself. Now it became clear, however, that Lloyd saw these changing situations as movement within a fixed order, an order whose basis was the universal, the immutable, the primal laws of human nature and society. As men strove to reach the goal of a perfected society, they had to change the means to fit the situation, but the goal was absolute. And so Lloyd expressed the essence of his reform philosophy in these paragraphs: "The secret of reform is not to attempt to force human nature out of its inevitable channels . . . but to detect and assist the unfolding of the new forms which grow out of the old." "The progress of humanity . . . is proceeding according to an intelligent plan, that line of march is irresistible, and the reformer's work is to remove one by one the obstructions in its way, strip off from growing man the outworn, outgrown forms at the instant of transition from one period to another. . . . Mankind's progress is towards absolute truth." "The whole theory of true reform is to set free the 'inward perfecting principle within the individual and society,' to use Aristotle's words, which when released from interceptions and oppressions can be easily guided to move to its proper ends."[13]

To complement the sometimes unsystematic ideas of Lloyd, there are the writings of his contemporary, Richard T. Ely, one of the first of a generation of American economists trained in Germany. Returning to America in the 1880's, Ely's interpretation of the American scene also has its foundation in his sense of a crisis, in his realization that new and grave dangers had appeared to threaten social unity. Like Lloyd he saw class divisions rending the homogeneity of the democracy and he, too, believed that a new theory of democracy, embracing positive and social conceptions of the rôle of the community in molding the future, was necessary to end the crisis.[14]

Ely's contributions to economic literature, therefore, up to World War I, were largely divided between an exposition of a philosophy to support the new theory of democracy and the translation of this philosophy into specific economic conceptions. In the interests of brevity, only Ely's philosophy can be dealt with.

Immediately upon his return from Germany, Ely launched open attacks on the English classical economists to whom Spencerian ethics

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] Lloyd, Lloyd Manuscripts, Box 20, Typescript Notebook 12 (November 1888), p. 330; *Ibid.*, pp. 330-31; *Man the Social Creator*, p. 179.

[14] Richard T. Ely, *The Social Law of Service* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1896), Chapter VII.

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owed so much. He directed his efforts against the metaphysics of the enemy position for the same reason as had Lloyd. The aura of scientific prestige must be stripped from the fatalistic implications of the conservative belief in man's bondage to immutable and material law before the people could be convinced of their ability to save themselves.

In making this attack, Ely's indoctrination in the theories of historicism and evolution while in Germany stood him in good stead. Using these ideas as the sharp edge of his analysis, Ely went forth to demonstrate the total irrelevance of Spencer and classical economics to modern life. By relegating them to the past, he would cut them off from the prestige of modern science.

The historical origin of this type of economics was to be found, wrote Ely, in the chaotic conditions resulting from the first inroads of industrialism. The spirit of the period found its fullest expression in Adam Smith. For Smith, liberty was to be interpreted in negative terms because he associated it with the defense of the uprooted individual in the midst of social chaos. This analysis was meaningful to a generation bewildered by the shock of social upheaval, but it was carried over without change in the thought of Spencer. It was obvious that an analysis of social conditions, a century old, could not apply to the later nineteenth century when men had begun to understand the new economic forces and bring them under control.[15]

Gradually, however, in spite of the classical economists and Spencer, English thought had developed to fit the needs of the situation. John Stuart Mill marked the first step toward this goal and Thomas Hill Green expressed its culmination: "As Adam Smith's philosophy of liberty is an expression of the eighteenth century, Thomas Hill Green's view may be looked upon as an expression of the philosophy of liberty with which the twentieth century opens."[16]

Ely's historical relativism and his belief that "The will of man is a main factor in all politico-economic phenomena, and this will must be regarded by students of society as itself a creative energy, introducing new forces"[17] demonstrate his adherence to the aspect of the pattern of ideas held by Lloyd that postulated that man is superior to natural law and is free to create his own future.

Yet Ely did not deviate from the opposing aspect of this pattern that did appreciate uniform natural law. Furthermore, he expressed this union of freedom and necessity in the same Aristotelian manner as had Lloyd. Working from an assumption of absolute laws, Ely

[15]Ely, *Studies in the Evolution of Industrial Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1913), pp. 398-405.
[16]*Ibid.*, p. 403.
[17]Quoted in John R. Everett, *Religion in Economics* (New York: Kings Crown Press, 1946), p. 83.

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stated that the aim of the group of young economists with whom he identified himself and whom he called the ethical school was ". . . to direct in a certain definite manner, so far as may be, this economic, social growth of mankind. Economists who adhere to this school wish to ascertain the laws of progress, and to show men how to make use of them."[18] Furthermore, "The ideal exists, but not universally. The ethical aim of reformers is to render general that excellence which at the time is isolated."[19]

This isolated ideal was the primitive social nature of man, his capacity to love those with whom he was in close association. Industrialism had created the present crisis by breaking up the small social groups in which this love had been expressed. But it was also creating the opportunity to reconstruct all of society along the lines of the principle of social solidarity.[20] With a sense of joyful responsibility, Ely blueprinted the road society would follow to achieve its harmonious goal. Unfolding in Aristotelian fashion, the evolution of economic structure was guided by its primitive potential toward final fulfillment. Through modern complexity, the original, the social goodness of man would inevitably become the essence of the total society. Inexorably, majestically, triumphantly, society was approaching the final stage of the economic evolution that Ely had sketched in this form:

1. The hunting and fishing stage
2. The pastoral stage
3. The agricultural stage
4. The handicraft stage
5. The industrial stage
   - 1st phase: Universal competition as an ideal
   - 2nd phase: Concentration
   - 3rd phase: Integration[21]

While Ely and Lloyd were both certain of the ultimate success of the fact of social solidarity, their formative years had seen the bitter economic clashes of the 1870's and 1880's. It follows, then, that a distinguishing mark of their writings is a sense of crisis, a belief that men must act energetically even though final victory was assured. Moreover, their philosophic concept of primitive social solidarity was used as a weapon for battle and not given systematic and finished exposition. Such polished detail, however, is to be found in the sociology of Charles Horton Cooley, a younger man, whose major publications

[18]Ely, *The Social Aspects of Christianity* (Boston: Crowell, 1889), p. 122.
[19]*Ibid.*, p. 119.
[20]Ely, *The Social Law of Service*, Chapter VII.
[21]Ely, *Studies in the Evolution of Industrial Society*, p. 26.

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appear in the first decade of the twentieth century. Vitally interested in the success of the liberal forces at work about him, participating in them vicariously from the quiet and isolation of his study, the calmness of Cooley's work reveals the certainty that victory has been achieved along the lines that Lloyd and Ely had forecast.

One of the most important American pioneers of social psychology, Cooley's contribution in this field rests on his discussion of the manner in which the individual and society are organically related, appearing and existing through a mutual dependence. For Cooley, the individual mind is social, depending upon the social process for its existence. The individual gains his personality from his idea of the other personalities around him. "Society, then . . . *is a relation among personal ideas.* In order to have society it is evidently necessary that persons should get together somewhere; and they get together only as personal ideas in the mind."[22] Given this unity of the individual and social mind, it follows that the richness and quality of both depend upon communication. The individual and society enlarge only as they fuse with each other.[23]

But while the individual is a product of a given historical environment, it does not follow that his character reflects only that social environment of which he is a part. Man can escape the determinism of the immediate situation because, beneath the forms of any contemporary culture, there rests the bedrock of a universal society in influencing the character of all human nature. This society is made up of certain universal traits that are found in all societies and these are based on primary groups. "By primary groups," Cooley meant, ". . . those characterized by intimate face-to-face association and coöperation. They are primary in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the individual. . . . The most important spheres of this intimate association . . . are the family, the play-group of children, and the neighborhood or community group of elders. These are practically universal, belonging to all times and all stages of development; and are accordingly a chief basis of what is universal in human nature and human ideals."[24] Human nature included ". . . those sentiments and impulses that are human in being superior to those of lower animals, and also in the sense that they belong to mankind at large, and not to any particular race or time. It means, particularly, sympathy and the innumerable sentiments into which sympathy enters, such as love. . . ."[25]

[22]Charles Horton Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (Rev. ed.; New York: Scribner, 1922), p. 119.
[23]Cooley, *Social Organization* (New York: Scribner, 1912), pp. 61-65.
[24]*Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.
[25]*Ibid.*, p. 28.

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These universal traits of human nature and the moral order which they formed have always been operating in society and so the heart of Cooley's theory of social progress was based on the belief that there had been no essential change in human nature, nor need be, because "We are so happily contrived that humanity can progress without a change in human nature, through the peculiar constitution of the nature we already have."[26]

In the primary groups, all the ideals which form the basis of human association are created: freedom, love, truth, loyalty, service. Beyond these is the fundamental ideal, moral unity, which underlies all other ideals. In these primary groups, then, there is no evil. Evil can be explained in purely historical terms and the two basic dilemmas of the men of the Enlightenment who believed in primitivism and progress can be explained away. Men have not followed the essential justice of their basic instincts because there has been no unity between the primary groups; there has been no chance for a common mind, embracing all men, to develop; thus widespread mutual misunderstanding has handicapped the process of social progress.[27]

The second dilemma of primitivism melted away just as easily under the warmth of Cooley's benign optimism. There is no conflict in his sociology between the primitive norms of the primary groups and increasingly complex social organization. These norms are not individualistic but social in nature; they are the models for any future social growth; the increasing complexity of society also means its inevitable salvation because through advancing organization and communication a world-wide mind would be produced, allowing the values of the primary groups to spread throughout the entire human community.[28]

The close similarity of this pattern of ideas that was central to Lloyd's theory of reform, fundamental to Ely's liberal economic principles, and basic to Cooley's entire sociological system suggests the possibility of its importance in the social thought of the progressive movement. It also suggests the vulnerable position of thinkers who accepted this type of analysis of the economic and social movements of their day. Accepting verbally the new ideas that had accompanied the industrial revolution, these men must have felt much superior to those who clung to the old standards of individualism and

[26]Cooley, "Process of Social Change," *Political Science Quarterly*, XII (March 1897), 71.

[27]See Cooley's statement that "Evil is now conceived as negative rather than positive, as inertia and confusion rather than ill intent. . . ." Journals (Ann Arbor, Mich.), Vol. 18a (1904), 110.

[28]Cooley, *Social Organization*, pp. 107-20.

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agrarianism. Had they not accepted industrialism and urbanism, had they not accepted the new ideas of historicism and evolution and the social nature of man?

But they had retained the old dream of a return to a simple, harmonious, primitive utopia; by juggling the new ideas, they had convinced themselves that the new material forces were bringing about the culmination of this dream. Intellectually and emotionally, they had sublimated the factual world to an ideal. They had divested themselves of any responsibility to try to understand what problems the new order would bring. Unconsciously, they had taken the position that the modern world of factories and cities, of classes and masses, was no different from the ideal world of their youth.

When the twentieth century, beginning with World War I, brought, not the dissolution of all problems, but a vast new complexity of them, the nature of the complete confusion of the men who believed in this pattern is clear. They had totally committed themselves to the new age without understanding it. They had abandoned the principles of the old ideals like individualism and agrarianism, but their new principles of positive and social democracy were not related to the facts of the present but were directed back to their primitive ideal. When this analysis of the future turned to dust in their hands, it must have seemed momentarily as if black magic were at work. The concrete facts of the world, as they knew them, were still there: the same people, the same political forms, the same economic and social structure; but the meanings, the relations which had bound these facts into a meaningful whole were gone. Out of total order had come total confusion.

Afternote

As an undergraduate in the 1940's, I had been taught that the founding of the *New Republic* magazine in 1914 institutionalized the pragmatic, realistic liberalism which had recently emerged in the United States. When I discovered that the editors of the *New Republic* expected the millennium to occur between 1914 and 1917, I became curious about the philosophic context of pragmatic and realistic liberalism and this article reports my findings which were later expanded in a book with the same title (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1958).

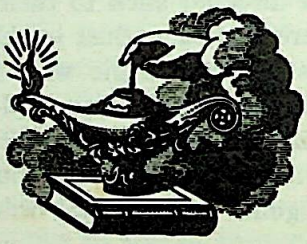
Having established to my own satisfaction the strong theme of primitivism in the Progressive movement, I then began to search for the historical background of this faith that progress must culminate in natural simplicity. My present hypothesis, that the paradox of progress and primitivism can be traced

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back to the English Puritans and forward to 1965, is to be found in my book, *Historians Against History: The Frontier Thesis and the National Covenant in American Historical Writing Since 1830* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1965).

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Richard Hofstadter

Beard and the Constitution: The History of an Idea

IT is now more than thirty-five years since the first appearance of Charles A. Beard's *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*. The story of its reception and criticism is familiar;[1] a large part of its thesis has been absorbed into the main body of American historical writing. Beard himself has both defended it and expounded some of its limitations. While at first even informed and critical minds were deeply shocked by its argument, they are shocked no longer;[2] and although the book has not yet lost every vestige of its controversial urgency, it has entered calmly into history. It has become less and less a book to argue over, more and more a book that must be studied if we are to locate our own thinking in the stream of intellectual events.

It is not my purpose in this essay to make another "evaluation" of the book—a task that can now be undertaken profitably and

[1] On this see Maurice Blinkoff, *The Influence of Charles A. Beard upon American Historiography*, University of Buffalo Studies, vol. 12, pp. 16ff (May 1936); Max Lerner, *Ideas Are Weapons* (New York: Viking Press, 1939) 152–69.

[2] In the ablest of the critical reviews written at the time of publication, for example, Professor E. S. Corwin accused Beard of being "bent on demonstrating the truth of socialistic theory of economic determinism and class struggle." (*History Teacher's Magazine*, vol. 5, no. 2 (February 1914), pp. 65–66.) Twenty years later Professor Corwin was writing that the Constitutional Convention "never for a moment relinquished the intention which it cherished from the outset of utilizing the new system for the purpose of throwing special safeguards about proprietarian interests." (*The Twilight of the Supreme Court* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934) 53.) See also Corwin's brilliant article, "The Constitution as Instrument and as Symbol," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 30, pp. 1071–85 (December 1936); see especially p. 1072.

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without presumption only by someone who has done massive research in the period with which it deals. I am interested rather in placing the ideas of the volume in their historical context; in calling attention to some of its neglected methodological implications; in discussing a significant ambiguity in its thought; and finally, in tracing the story of Beard's later attitude toward the Constitution as a symptomatic fragment of American intellectual history in the last three decades.

I

The most deeply rooted of the sources of Beard's economic interpretation and emphasis on class conflict can be found far back in American history. There had been a long tradition of economic materialism and consciousness of class in American political thought, deriving in good part from James Harrington and embracing such writers as James Madison (to whom, of course, Beard was especially indebted), John Adams, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Orestes Brownson, and Richard Hildreth. It would be claiming too much to impute equally to all these writers a systematic espousal of the economic interpretation of history or of the other ideas that formed Beard's early work; but no one thoroughly familiar with American political writing could fail to find in them frequent marginal suggestions of a kind that would point toward Beard's inquiry. Such late nineteenth-century writers as Alexander Johnston, John Fiske, Woodrow Wilson, William Graham Sumner, and Henry Jones Ford had seized upon such suggestions, and each of them anticipated in some respect the thesis that we identify with Beard.[3]

A second source of Beard's ideas, in the more immediate back-

[3] See John Fiske in *The Critical Period of American History* (Boston: Houghton, 1897) 243; Alexander Johnston in his article on the Convention of 1787 in *Lalor's Cyclopedia of Political Science* . . . (New York: Rand, McNally, 1882), vol. 1, p. 638. Woodrow Wilson had pointed out that the Constitution's "plan and structure . . . had been meant to check the sweep and power of popular majorities . . . The government had, in fact, been originated and organized upon the initiative and primarily in the interest of the mercantile and wealthy classes . . . it had been urged to adoption by a minority under the concerted and aggressive leadership of able men representing a ruling class . . . the pressure of a strong and intelligent class, possessed of unity and informed by a conscious solidarity of material interests." (*Division and Reunion* (New York: Longmans, 1893) 12–13.) Henry Jones Ford's *The Rise and Growth of American Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1898) opened its chapter on the Constitution with these words: "The constitutional history of the United States begins with the establishment of the government of the masses by the classes." (P. 59.) William Graham Sumner took a similar view in an essay written in 1896 or 1897; see *Essays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), vol. 2, pp. 340ff, especially pp. 349–50.

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ground, was the Populist movement and the rise of western self-consciousness. The Turner school of historical interpretation was, in a broad sense, the product of a revolt of the West that found its political expression in Populism, its cultural expression in the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, and its literary manifesto in Hamlin Garland's *Crumbling Idols*. Garland declaimed against the provincialism and colonialism of eastern writers and predicted that Chicago would replace Boston and New York as the literary capital of the United States; Turner argued: "The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West." Populism and Bryanism had thrown the clash of debtors and creditors, the antagonism of sections, into bold relief; projected backward into American history, western self-consciousness encouraged concentration on sectional struggles and the history of currency and fiscal policy.

When Beard began work on his book, the Turner school had already produced important monographs, among them William A. Schaper's *Sectionalism and Representation in South Carolina*[4] and Charles H. Ambler's *Sectionalism in Virginia*,[5] both of which contained data of importance to his thesis. But the most relevant product of Turner's seminar was Orin Libby's careful study of *The Geographical Distribution of the Vote of the Thirteen States on the Federal Constitution, 1787–8*, which appeared in 1894. In a preface to this work Turner pointed to the artificiality of state as opposed to sectional boundaries in the study of American history and complained that "the economic interpretation of our history has been neglected." Turner anticipated that a series of studies of "natural economic groupings" in American history would be invaluable in studying the political past.[6]

Libby's study, which Beard drew upon heavily, put much emphasis upon the debtor-creditor conflict under the Articles of Confederation. Libby found that the state system under the Articles had acted "as a shield for the debtor classes," that opposition to the Constitution was confined to the interior where "interests were agricultural

[4] It appeared in the *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1900* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), vol. 1, pp. 237–463.

[5] Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1910.

[6] Frederick J. Turner in Orin G. Libby, *Geographical Distribution of the Vote* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1894) iii and vii.

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as opposed to commercial, rural as opposed to urban," that a fundamental reason for calling the Constitutional Convention of 1787 was "a desire to provide for the public necessities a revenue adequate to the exigencies of the Union," and that the victory of the new Constitution was won "by the influence of those classes along the great highways of commerce . . . and wealth . . ."[7]

The social thought of the Progressive era and the intellectual climate encouraged by muckraking constituted a third source of Beard's ideas. Many of the Progressive thinkers, carrying over the old Populist antinomy of the masses versus the classes, were disposed to apply it to the past. V. L. Parrington, whose outlook was shaped by Populism and Progressivism, later declared: "Considered historically perhaps the chief contribution of the Progressive movement to American political thought was its discovery of the essentially undemocratic nature of the federal constitution."[8]

The most important articulation of the Progressive spirit, in this respect, was a book with which Beard was quite familiar—J. Allen Smith's *The Spirit of American Government*—which discussed at length the philosophy behind the Constitution. "Democracy—government by the people, or directly responsible to them—was not the object which the framers of the American Constitution had in view, but the very thing which they wished to avoid," Smith argued. He saw in the document a compromise between the undemocratic aims of the framers and their need to produce a constitution that would be acceptable enough to be ratified. The Constitutional Convention, he concluded, was attended by many illustrious men with a genuine desire to further the welfare of the country as they understood it, but they represented "the wealthy and conservative classes, and had for the most part but little sympathy with the popular theory of government."[9] Although Smith's view of the Constitution anticipated some aspects of Beard's, it was far less circumstantial. Smith approached the Constitution essentially as a problem in political theory; he hinted at the economic base of the movement for the Constitution but made no attempt to elaborate upon it.

[7] *Ibid.*, 2, 49, 50, and 69; see also *ibid.*, 51–52.

[8] Introduction to J. Allen Smith, *Growth and Decadence of Constitutional Government* (New York: Holt, 1930) xi.

[9] J. Allen Smith, *The Spirit of American Government* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), chap. 3, especially pp. 29–32.

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Changes in the social sciences also influenced Beard profoundly. The seminal thinkers of his generation, revolting against the formalistic approach of their predecessors,[10] were reaching out to allied disciplines with fresh enthusiasm and perceptivity. The historical method was gaining ground in law and economics. Advocates of sociological jurisprudence like Holmes and Pound were drawing upon a wide acquaintance with sociology, philosophy, and the history of law. Veblen was studying economic institutions as a sociologist, social psychologist, and historian of ideas. Dewey was elaborating an evolutionary and historical approach to philosophy and arguing for a cultural naturalism. The men of this generation felt themselves united by a common effort to tear through the veil of formalistic speculation — Veblen in his attack on abstract and deductive economics, Pound in his criticisms of static and formalized law, Brandeis in his fight to get the facts of life into the meditations of the Supreme Court, Dewey in his war against formal logic, and Beard in his assault on the juristic approach to the Constitution.

Beard was fully persuaded of the value of this effort to break down the barriers between disciplines. In his study of laws and constitutions he not only used economic and geographical methods then being developed by other historians like William E. Dodd and Frederick Jackson Turner, but also came to the writing of history with a conceptual framework much enriched by such legal and political theorists as Arthur F. Bentley, Frank J. Goodnow, Roscoe Pound, and others.[11] "We are coming to realize," he wrote in 1908,

> that a science dealing with man has no special field of data all to itself, but is rather merely a way of looking at the same things — a view of a certain aspect of human action. The human being is not essentially different when he is depositing his ballot from what he is in the counting house or at the work bench. In the place of a "natural" man, an "economic" man, a "religious" man or a "political" man, we now observe the whole man participating in the work of government.[12]

The incongruity of old legal theory and the changing legal prac-

[10] On this movement see Morton G. White, *American Social Thought* (New York: Viking Press, 1949) especially chap. 11.

[11] This is not a comprehensive inquiry into the sources of Beard's thought; any such undertaking would also note in this connection the influence of such foreign scholars as Frederick W. Maitland, Rudolf von Jhering, Anton Menger, and Rudolf Stammler. See *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* (New York: Macmillan, 1913) 8–9.

[12] Charles A. Beard, *Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908) 6.

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tice of the Progressive era compelled many thoughtful jurists to become aware—as Holmes had long been—of changes in the social foundations of law. There was a growing tendency to interpret the judicial process—and after it every other type of juristic event—in the light of the social and psychological forces that underlay it. As Roscoe Pound wrote in 1910, "Public thought and feeling have changed, and, whatever the law in the books, the law in action has changed with them."[13] "The history of juristic thought tells us nothing unless we know the social forces that lay behind it."[14] The sociological movement in jurisprudence turned away from first principles and static generalizations to "pragmatism as a philosophy of law," making human situations, rather than logic, central.[15] Students of law were driven to the conclusion, as Frank J. Goodnow put it, that a kind of legal opportunism was more likely to be productive of social good than "adherence to general theories which are to be applied at all times." "This feeling," he continued, "which has influenced philosophy through the writings of the pragmatic school, has been strengthened by the theory of the economic interpretation of history, which of recent years has been received with so much favor."[16]

A comparable tendency, in political theory, was the drive to reduce theories of the nature of the state to clashes of concrete social interests rather than clashes of mutually inconsistent abstract dogmas. Beard was familiar with Arthur F. Bentley's *The Process of Government*, a vigorous book that traced all legal and political processes to struggles among interest groups. "Law," Bentley wrote, "is activity, just as government is. It is a group process, just as government is. It is a forming, a systematization, a struggle, an adaptation of group interests, just as government is." And everything that could be said about law could be said about constitutions, for "constitutions are but a special form of law."[17]

But if legal and constitutional ideas could be unmasked and re-

[13] Roscoe Pound, "Law in Books and Law in Action," *American Law Review*, vol. 44, p. 21 (January 1910).

[14] *Ibid.*, 34.

[15] Pound, "Mechanical Jurisprudence," *Columbia Law Review*, vol. 8, pp. 609–10 (December 1908); see also Pound, "The Need of a Sociological Jurisprudence," *Green Bag*, vol. 19, pp. 607–15 (October 1907).

[16] Frank J. Goodnow, *Social Reform and the Constitution* (New York: Macmillan, 1911) 3.

[17] Arthur F. Bentley, *The Process of Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1908) 152, 244, 272, and 295.

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duced to interests and pressures, what would become of abstract juristic theories of the state? Plainly they would be supplanted by empirical inquiry into the origins and development of actual states, not as theoretical repositories of "sovereignty" but as administrative and coercive agencies, whose control was fought for by conflicting social groups. "How," Bentley asked, "can one be satisfied with a theory that comes down hard on the federal Constitution as primarily a great national ideal, in the very face of the struggles and quarrels of the constitutional convention for the maintenance of pressing social interests?" [18]

It is clear that liberals were formulating their own theory of the state, and that Beard's book was in part an attempt to document this theory out of American experience. The liberal theory occupied a middle ground between older formal theories which treated the state as the product of abstract doctrines and beliefs, and the Marxian theory which described it as the naked coercive instrument of the ruling class. To the liberals, as to the Marxists, the state was a coercive agency which expressed social and economic pressures; but the liberals differed from the Marxists in that they did not minimize the importance or possible efficacy of pressure upon the state by groups outside the ruling class. They were satisfied with the more pragmatic conclusion that the state in a parliamentary democracy offers a sort of fluctuating barometric reading that registers all the force brought to bear by various interest groups. "It would seem," wrote Beard,

> that the real state is not the juristic state, but is that group of persons able to work together effectively for the accomplishment of their joint aims, and overcome all opposition on the particular point at issue at a particular period of time . . . Changes in the form of the state have been caused primarily by the demand of groups for power, and in general these groups have coincided with economic classes which have arisen within the political society.[19]

Marxian socialism, although it had no prominent exponents in academic circles, was winning wider interest in the years after the turn of the century. Most Progressive writers ignored Marx's economic analysis of capitalism and his apocalyptic social predictions

[18] *Ibid.*, 135.
[19] *Politics*, 12 and 20.

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but absorbed and used his approach to history. Those later critics of Beard who thought to discredit his work by coupling his name with Marx's[20] were guilty of more than the obvious demagogy of attempting to refute an idea by invidious association; failing to understand the era in which his important early books had been written, they ignored the congeniality of the economic interpretation of history to the Progressive mind. In 1902 E. R. A. Seligman, soon to be Beard's colleague at Columbia, published a sensible and popular little book, *The Economic Interpretation of History*, in which he observed: "Wherever we turn in the maze of recent historical investigation, we are confronted by the overwhelming importance attached by the younger and abler scholars to the economic factor in political and social progress."[21] Seligman favored a qualified version of the economic interpretation of history (described by Beard eleven years later as being "as nearly axiomatic as any proposition in social science can be"[22]), which he predicted would in the future "occupy an honored place in the record of mental development and scientific progress."[23]

Some socialist writers had produced works that Beard thought "deserved study,"[24] among which he named A. M. Simons' *Social Forces in American History* and Gustavus Myers' *History of Great American Fortunes* and *History of the Supreme Court*. Simons' book contained a crude but clear anticipation of Beard's thesis. "The constitutional convention," he asserted, "was little more than a committee of the merchants, manufacturers, bankers, and planters, met to arrange a government that would promote their interests."[25]

It is clear that by 1913 the time was ripe for a thorough presentation of the new thesis on the American Constitution.[26] What was

[20] See, for example, Theodore C. Smith, "The Writing of American History in America, from 1884 to 1934," *American Historical Review*, vol. 40, pp. 447–49 (April 1935), and Beard's answer, *American Historical Review*, vol. 41, pp. 74–87 (October 1935).

[21] Edwin R. A. Seligman, *The Economic Interpretation of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1902) 86.

[22] *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*, 15n.

[23] Seligman, *The Economic Interpretation of History*, 166.

[24] *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*, 6n.

[25] Algie M. Simons, *Social Forces in American History* (New York: Macmillan, 1911) 92–96, especially 95–96. Gustavus Myers, *History of the Supreme Court of the United States* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1912), is somewhat more shrill; see chap. 3, especially pp. 129–34.

[26] In reconstructing the intellectual atmosphere in which Beard worked, I have drawn primarily on materials cited in *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*. The items

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still needed was a student of politics and history possessing a bold and free mind, capable of applying systematically the insights of current critical thought, who could turn up fresh data and combine them with a general history of the constitutional period. Beard discovered just such a body of data when he unearthed Treasury Department records that had lain unused for well over a century.

II

The subject of method can be dealt with briefly in passing. Previous discussion of Beard's book has been purely substantive; both the general economic interpretation of history and Beard's specific version of the struggle over the Constitution have been endlessly debated, but no attention has been given to one of the work's greatest achievements. Methodologically it is a triumph of systematic intelligence. Historical method in America has never taken adequate account of Beard's technique of illuminating a historical movement or event through a composite, quantitative account of the economic and social backgrounds of the personnel involved in it.

What Beard was trying to do in his famous chapter on the economic backgrounds and fiscal holdings of the members of the Convention was to locate their social position as a group, and from this add to our understanding of the adoption of the Constitution as it related to the class structure of late eighteenth-century America. He collected information not only on the holdings of the framers in the public debt, but also on many other relevant factors in their background: the occupations and economic interests of their fathers, their own educations, professions, landholdings, political offices, business interests, marital connections, and social status. He was using in 1913 a somewhat rudimentary form of the systematic career-line study, which political scientists and sociologists have begun to use only recently and which American historians have hardly used at all.[27]

cited here by Pound, Goodnow, Bentley, J. Allen Smith, Seligman, Simons, Myers, Schaper, Ambler, and Libby were all referred to in that work.

[27] In a certain sense, this sort of systematic study, applied to an intellectual and literary elite rather than political leaders, can be traced at least as far back as Alphonse de Candolle, *Histoire des Sciences et des Savants depuis Deux Siècles* (Geneva: H. Georg, 1885), and Alfred Odin, *Genèse des Grands Hommes* (Paris: H. Wetter, 1895). These works were brought to the attention of Americans by Lester Ward in his *Applied Sociology* (Boston: Ginn, 1906). J. McKeen Cattell, who was at Columbia with Beard, applied a similar method in some early studies in *Science*, n.s., vol. 24, pp. 732–42 (December 7, 1906), and vol. 32, pp. 633–48

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Beard's method was unrefined in details, but the broad beginning he made was in itself remarkable. Had his technique been seized upon by his own generation and refined and applied systematically to the major events and movements in American history, the resulting contribution to historical understanding would have been immense. Historical writing today — and I refer here not to the narrative art but to the great body of monographic investigation whose tradition is that of the social "sciences" — is still wanting in method, in no small part because of a curious failure to explore the vistas opened by Beard thirty-seven years ago.

III

The undercurrent of ambiguity in Beard's book is worth dwelling upon at some length, not for the sake of a textual criticism of the volume, but because it may enlarge our understanding of the Progressive mind. This ambiguity is most evident in Beard's long chapter on the economic position of the Founding Fathers, which stimulated more heated criticism than any other part of his book. Was he saying that the Fathers framed the Constitution because they expected to profit by it? Or was he merely saying that the ways in which the Fathers made their profits predisposed them to look at political and constitutional issues from a certain perspective? Was he, as Max Lerner has

(November 4, 1910). Systematic studies have been made of professionals and intellectuals, educators and school boards, labor leaders and businessmen, as well as politicians and bureaucrats. I have not found a study of any body of *political* personnel that predates Beard's. Among early studies in this field the following are notable: Robert T. Nightingale, "The Personnel of the British Foreign Office and Diplomatic Service," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 24, pp. 310–31 (May 1930); Dale A. Hartman, "British and American Ambassadors: 1893–1930," *Economica*, vol. 11, pp. 328–41 (August 1931); and Harold J. Laski, "The Personnel of the British Cabinet, 1801–1924," *Studies in Law and Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), chap. 8. Among the best of the more recent applications of the technique to political personnel have been H. Dewey Anderson, "The Educational and Occupational Attainments of Our National Rulers," *Scientific Monthly*, vol. 40, pp. 511–18 (June 1935); Simon Haxey (pseud.), *England's Money Lords: Tory M.P.* (New York: Harrison, Hilton, 1939); Hans Gerth, "The Nazi Party: Its Leadership and Composition," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 45, pp. 517–41 (January 1940); and Franz Neumann, *Behemoth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942) 365ff. Two challenging recent treatments of the American businessman that suggest similar possibilities for the politician are C. Wright Mills, "The American Business Elite: A Collective Portrait," Supplement V to *Journal of Economic History* (December 1945) 20–44, and William Miller, "American Historians and the Business Elite," *Journal of Economic History*, vol. 9, pp. 184–208 (November 1949). For an informal treatment of a political group, see George E. Mowry, "The California Progressive and His Rationale: A Study in Middle Class Politics," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 36, pp. 239–50 (September 1949).

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asserted, "making the economic interpretation theory of men's motives rather than of men's ideas"? [28] Or was he simply trying to show that property holdings were broadly relevant to constitutional and political attitudes?

It was possible to argue either position from the text of the volume itself. At one point Beard asserted: "The overwhelming majority of members, at least five-sixths, were immediately, directly, and personally interested in the outcome of their labors at Philadelphia, and were to a greater or lesser extent economic beneficiaries from the adoption of the Constitution." [29] At another point he stated: "The Constitution was essentially an economic document. . . ." [30]

But there were also passages in which he carefully expressed a much larger view of the matter (passages which his critics too frequently chose to ignore). At the outset of his examination of the economic holdings of the Fathers, he wrote:

> The purpose of such an inquiry is not, of course, to show that the Constitution was made for the personal benefit of the Convention. Far from it. . . . The only point here considered is: Did they represent distinct groups whose economic interests they understood and felt in concrete, definite form through their own personal experience with identical property rights, or were they working merely under the guidance of abstract principles of political science? [31]

Again, in summarizing his conclusions at the close of the chapter, he did not declare that the Fathers were working to make money for themselves, but simply that they were not altogether "disinterested"; that they

> knew through their personal experiences in economic affairs the precise results which the new government that they were setting up was designed to attain. As a group of doctrinaires, like the Frankfort Assembly of 1848, they would have failed miserably; but as practical men they were able to build the new government upon the only foundations which could be stable: fundamental economic interests. [32]

[28] Lerner, *Ideas Are Weapons*, 161.

[29] *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*, 149; see also p. 188, where he describes the Constitution as "an economic document drawn with superb skill by men whose property interests were immediately at stake . . . [which] appealed directly and unerringly to identical interests in the country at large."

[30] *Ibid.*, 24.

[31] *Ibid.*, 73.

[32] *Ibid.*, 151.

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These passages were undoubtedly entitled to more respectful attention than many critics gave them.

If one were primarily concerned to present a lawyer's case for the book, one could rest it upon these explicit delineations of purpose, arguing that they, rather than any incidental overstatement, should govern the interpretation of the volume. But the presence of the ambiguity goes deeper than this; it is built into the very structure of Beard's research. If he had been primarily interested in the formation of the Founding Fathers' ideas on politics, taking the perspective of their class only as a clue, why was his chapter on their political ideas such a literal-minded compound of scattered quotes from the debates in the Convention? Why was the chapter on the property holdings and economic position of the Fathers so carefully worked out in the context of the economic and political situation of the Confederation, while the formation of the Fathers' ideas on democracy was ignored and the content of these ideas retailed without any effort to place them in the framework of eighteenth-century thought? As between ideas and interests, it is interests that have the foreground in his volume.

Behind this ambiguity in statement, then, lay a real ambiguity in thought; and behind the ambiguity in thought lay a certain dualism in Beard's position. Something, no doubt, can be attributed to the fact that when revisionist theses appear in the writing of history, they are usually overstated. Something, too, can be attributed to the fact that Beard was a scholar who naturally wished to exploit to the full an enterprising and resourceful discovery among old Treasury Department records. But what was it in the beginning that led him to unearth these dusty records, untouched for more than a century? What was it that made him feel closer to "reality" among old 6 percent securities than in the volumes of eighteenth-century political speculation? The answer must be found in the fact that Beard was not simply a scholar; he was, and remained his life long, a publicist with an urgent interest in the intellectual and political milieu in which he lived. As a young man, in both England and the United States, he had shown himself in sympathy with popular causes and with the current impulse toward social criticism.[33] He

[33] For Beard's experiences and ideas before 1913, see Bernard C. Borning, "The Political Philosophy of Young Charles A. Beard," *American Political Science Review*, vol. 43, pp. 1165–78 (December 1949).

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could hardly fail to absorb the style of thought of the Populist-Progressive-muckraking era; the limitations, as well as the best insights of that style of thought, left their impress upon his book.

As the most enlightened scholars and journalists of that period saw it, selfish interests had made use of the government to serve private ends, and in so doing had subverted democracy. The problem of journalism and scholarship was to find out how they had done this, to expose the ideas that drew a cloak of protection about them, and to show how their illicit activities had rendered false the genteel picture of society drawn in conventional economics, conventional political science, and conventional fiction. The iconoclasm of the period was concerned with the motives and activities of the rich and established classes. For the most part, it failed to go very far in showing how the spirit of gain that had been so rampant in America had extended to the Progressive elements themselves, to the little businessmen and farmers whose discontents gave the movement its vital surge.[34]

This was, then, an extroverted not an introspective movement. It was much more concerned with examining and destroying the declining ideas of an earlier age and a discredited order than in evaluating its own. But skill in dealing with the human context of ideas is in large part a by-product of self-evaluation, in which alone the full personal urgency and the psychological dialectic of ideas can be felt. The highest pitch of understanding of the formation of ideas is not likely to emerge in a climate of opinion where intense self-examination has not yet begun. To use Karl Mannheim's terminology, the best thought of the Progressive era was in a transitional state between the theory of ideology and the sociology of knowledge, and in any such age of transition a certain fruitful ambiguity of thought is to be expected. Before one could go very far in examining *how* ideas and interests were related, the point had to be established, and established against considerable resistance, that they were so intimately and universally related that no phase of political life could be exempted from the principle—that a sacred symbol like the Constitution could, at least in this respect, be treated in the same light as a railway franchise.

[34] On this see Walter Lippmann, *Drift and Mastery* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1914), especially chap. VII.

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The common preoccupation of the Progressive political critics, the muckrakers, and the early realistic and naturalistic novelists was the search for "reality." But what, to them, *was* reality? At bottom, I think, it had three characteristics: It was rough and sordid; it was hidden, neglected, and, so to speak, off-stage; and it was essentially a stream of external and material events, of which psychic events were a kind of pale reflex.[35] Reality was the bribe, the rebate, the bought franchise, the sale of adulterated food. It was what one found in *The Jungle, The Octopus, Wealth versus Commonwealth,* or *The Shame of the Cities*. The imagination of the era was more fundamentally conditioned by reporters and literary journalists than we usually recognize, and its characteristic goal was "the inside story." That is why Beard's book, when it appeared, was so quickly seen to fit into the political context of the twentieth century. It may also help to explain why Beard's rather casual treatment of the political ideas of the Founding Fathers seemed so much more representative of current political argument than of the intellectual climate of the late eighteenth century.

IV

With the coming of World War I and the passing of the Progressive enthusiasm, the American intellectual climate changed drastically. For different reasons, however, the critical views that had become identified with Beard's work continued to be relevant and appealing to a large public. The Progressives had criticized the American past because they hoped that in the future America could be remade; the intellectuals of the 20s continued to criticize because they needed to explain to themselves why they had lost this hope. Progressivism had extended muckraking backward into the past in order to purify the present; the alienated mood of the 20s accepted muckraking simply because America seemed so wonderfully and extravagantly vulnerable. At a time when such an unsparingly iconoclastic book as W. E. Woodward's study of George Washington — an ideal model of an attack upon the father-image — was being widely read, Beard's critical view of the Constitution period was still appreciated. The two major historical works of the 20s, the Beards'

[35] "In the American metaphysic," Lionel Trilling observes, "reality is always material reality, hard, resistant, unformed, impenetrable, and unpleasant. And that mind is alone felt to be trustworthy which most resembles this reality by most nearly reproducing the sensations it affords." (*The Liberal Imagination* (New York: Viking Press, 1950) 13; cf. 4–5.)

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Rise of American Civilization and Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought*, were ideological residues of the Progressive era, and in both, Beard's thesis about the Constitution took a central place.

The growth of a still different intellectual temper in the period of the great depression and the New Deal found the Beard-Parrington synthesis, at the zenith of its appeal, a pervasive expression of the American liberal mind. The class struggle was rediscovered; the vigorous liberal outlook of the Beard-Parrington synthesis and its use of the economic interpretation of history were congenial to the day of popular-front Marxism and sociological literary criticism. In 1938 when the editors of the *New Republic* conducted a symposium on "Books That Changed Our Minds" and asked a number of American liberal intellectuals to suggest titles that ought to be discussed, the two most frequently mentioned titles were Beard's *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* and Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class*, followed by works of Spengler, Freud, Henry Adams, John Dewey, and Parrington. Harold J. Laski wrote that the works of Beard and Parrington had "opened windows for me into the significance of the American tradition as no other books since Tocqueville."[36]

In 1935, when Beard's book was republished with a new introduction, he naturally felt that it had met the test of time. He pointed out that readers had been warned in advance of its theoretical bias and its emphasis, that its very title had suggested its limits, and that no pretension to completeness of interpretation had been made. He denied that he had ever been committed to "economic determinism," and added, in a curiously casual but sweeping concession to relativism, that his book did not "explain" the Constitution or "exclude other explanations deemed more satisfactory to the explainers." Praising the Founding Fathers for their profound insight

[36] Counting authors rather than titles, Veblen, mentioned 16 times, came first, and Beard, mentioned 11 times, came second; they were followed by Dewey (10), Freud (9), Spengler (7 each), Lenin (6), I. A. Richards (6), and a scattering for others. Beard himself proposed the writings of Brooks Adams, Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, and Croce's *History: Its Theory and Practice*. See Malcolm Cowley and Bernard Smith, eds., *Books That Changed Our Minds* (New York: Doubleday, 1940) 12, 19–20. When titles were counted, Parrington was referred to 5 times.

There had been a similar triumph for Beard's thesis in the realm of college teaching. Of 42 college texts examined in 1936, 37 had substantially adopted Beard's position on the Constitution. See Blinkoff, *Influence of Charles A. Beard*, 21–36.

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into political realities, he urged that they be emulated in their effort to ask, whenever theories of national power or states' rights are propounded, what interests lie behind them and to whose advantage change or stability would operate. "By refusing to do this we become victims of history—clay in the hands of its makers." In December 1937 at a meeting of the American Historical Association celebrating the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Constitution, Beard once again repudiated the notion that "economic considerations determine or explain all history," but argued the case for a realistic approach to constitutional ideas. The next task of constitutional scholarship, he suggested, would be to treat the constitutional attitudes of both interest-groups and historians as problems in the sociology of knowledge.[37]

However, the intellectual milieu was already changing, and on this occasion Beard's view of the Constitution changed with it. The rise of fascism abroad had already caused Americans to look more and more favorably on their own political institutions, and the Nazi-Soviet pact delivered a stunning blow to Marxism. The rise of the New Deal at home had revived interest in reform, and by making the state a patron not merely of the disinherited classes but also of many artists and writers, had helped to foster a literary and intellectual nationalism that was raised to a still higher pitch during World War II. As the ugly picture of the United States of the 20s faded from view and the far uglier outlines of the twentieth-century world became painfully clear, the American past took on an increasingly roseate light. The re-embracement of America that followed became as intense as the earlier vogue of criticism and expatriation. Van Wyck Brooks, whose *America's Coming of Age* (1915) had struck the dominant note of the disillusionment of the 20s, now turned to the sugary cycle that began with *The Flowering of New England*; John Dos Passos turned from *U. S. A.* to *The Ground We Stand On*; Sinclair Lewis from *Babbitt* and *Main Street* to *The Prodigal Parents*. Even H. L. Mencken in his autobiographical volumes struck a note of sentiment and nostalgia.[38] The fact that Beard, at the moment of growing international consciousness, moved toward

[37] Conyers Read, ed., *The Constitution Reconsidered* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938) 159–66.

[38] On the note of nationalism in the 30s, see Alfred Kazin, *On Native Grounds* (New York: Reynal, 1942), chap. 16.

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a more intense isolationism has obscured the essential conformity of his heightened nationalism with the main trend of the early 40s. When the defense of the United States, as he understood it, became his primary concern, his vision of the American past softened perceptibly.

Writing under the shadow of militarism and dictatorship, Beard became increasingly preoccupied with the task of preserving a form of government that clung to civilian control and decentralized authority. As his original view of the Constitution had taken shape in an age of domestic conflict, his final view was fashioned in an age of world conflict.[39] The struggle of classes seemed less important; the process by which constitutionalism could be preserved more vital. *The Republic*, which appeared in 1943 as the nation was preparing for the final effort of the war, reflected his essential satisfaction with the American form of constitutionalism, which he attractively defined as "the civilian way of living together in the Republic." Exploring the historical merits of the American political system, Beard put much weight upon its effectuality in preventing undue concentration of political power and dominance by the military. Considerations not important to him in either edition of *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* now seemed to demand a material restatement of the political outlook and aspirations of the framers. "Leaders among the framers of the Constitution," Beard observed, "regarded the resort to Constitutional government instead of a military dictatorship as their greatest triumph. In my opinion they were entitled to view their achievement that way."[40]

[39] That Beard was acutely conscious of the historical context of his later thinking on the subject became clear in the chapter he added to his *The Economic Basis of Politics* (1922) on the occasion of its republication in 1945. There he indicated that the economic interpretation of politics, while representing an important note of realism in any social analysis, was far less adequate to the understanding of twentieth-century conditions than it had been to nineteenth-century industrialism, parliamentary democracy, the *pax Britannica*, and the relatively free market economy. Analyzing the implications of the New Deal at home and fascism and militarism abroad, Beard concluded that the growth of state intervention in the modern economy had reached a point at which the "political man" is often in a position to give orders to the "economic man" rather than to take them from him. In the United States, for example, the New Deal had made basic economic interests dependent upon the political process to a degree that was significantly different from the conditions of the past. As a result of the rise of fascism and militarism, the "military man" had also entered into full competition with the "economic man" and the "political man" for power over the state. See *The Economic Basis of Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1945) 71–114.

[40] *The Republic* (New York: Viking Press, 1943) 21.

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At first, Beard explained, he had paid scant attention to evidences of a movement for military dictatorship in the years before the drafting of the Constitution, but as time went on he had found evidences of its importance accumulating in his files. This brought him to

> a somewhat different view of the movement for the Constitution. One of the interpretations now generally held is that the Constitution was the outcome of a conflict between radical or agrarian forces on the one side and the forces of conservative or capitalistic reaction on the other. That conflict was undoubtedly raging, and the advocates of the Constitution were involved in it. But I am of the opinion that there were three parties to the struggle. Besides the radicals and the conservatives there was an influential group on the extreme right of the conservatives—a group that was ripe and ready for a resort to the sword. . . . Had the movement for forming a new Constitution by peaceful processes failed, there is no doubt in my mind that the men of the sword would have made a desperate effort to set up a dictatorship by arms.[41]

Thus the Constitution appeared not merely as a victory of conservative republicanism over democracy but also of republicanism over military dictatorship—a pertinent theme in 1943.

The best measure of the change from Beard's original view of the making of the Constitution to his later view may be had by comparing the Beards' chapter on the subject in *The Rise of American Civilization* (1927) with that in their *Basic History of the United States* (1944). The difference is not so much structural as it is semantic. The two narratives have a great deal in common, but there are significant omissions in the second account and significantly different verbal formulations. The change in tone is epitomized in the titles; in the first book the account of the struggle over the Constitution is called "Populism and Reaction," in the second, "Constitutional Government for the United States." In the first the authors speak of the political purpose of the framers of the Constitution in erecting a system of checks and balances as "dissolving the energy of the democratic majority." In the second, checks and balances are described as preventing "the accumulation of despotic power in any hands, even in the hands of the people who had the right to vote in elections."

The first, in summarizing the political attitudes of the Founding

[41] *Ibid.*, 22–26.

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Fathers, says: "Almost unanimous was the opinion that democracy was a dangerous thing . . . to be given as little voice as possible in the new system . . ." The second describes balanced government as one which would allow "the persistent will of the majority" to prevail; "yet at no time could the 'snap judgment' of a popular majority prevail in all departments of the federal government." The first observes that "More than half the delegates in attendance were either investors or speculators in the public securities which were to be buoyed up by the new Constitution. All knew by experience the relation of property to government." The second characterizes the Convention personnel as a conservative body of "merchants, lawyers, and planters," but refrains from mentioning public security holdings. The first argues that the division of the voters in the ratification of the Constitution ran along economic lines. The second indicates that "a tempest of public debate" raged over the merits of the document, but labels its critics in general terms as "radicals" and "friends of liberty," and characterizes its proponents only as "able defenders." The first closes with an exposition of the economic interpretation of politics and group struggle expressed by Madison in *The Federalist*, Number 10. The second drops Madison and closes with the observation that, "without drawing the sword in civil war, without shedding a drop of blood, a new plan of government had been proposed, framed, discussed, and adopted."[42]

Afternote

This article also appeared, along with other essays on its subject, in Howard Beale, ed., *Charles A. Beard* (Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1954). The author will have a more extended discussion of Beard in a forthcoming book, *The Progressive Historians: Turner, Beard, Parrington* to be published by Alfred A. Knopf.

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[42] Cf. Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, *A Basic History of the United States* (Philadelphia: Blakiston, 1944) 120, 126–27, 131–32, 136–37, and *The Rise of American Civilization* (New York: Macmillan, ed. 1933), vol. 1, pp. 310–11, 315–16, 332–33, 334–35.

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John Chynoweth Burnham

Psychiatry, Psychology and the Progressive Movement

RECENT INTERPRETATIONS HAVE MADE THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT OF THE pre-1917 era one of the most interesting topics in American history. Much of this new scholarship represents the search of modern liberals for their own political identity. Currently a more thoroughgoing reinterpretation is being undertaken by a group of historians who are studying *social control* as the Progressives visualized it and put it into action.[1] This latest research on Progressivism ranges far beyond what is essentially political history.

A study of the two professions dealing with the human psyche, psychiatry and psychology, before World War I, contributes to a broader view of Progressivism by suggesting the hypothesis that the Progressive movement was not limited to politics, economics and social philosophy, but pervaded all of the endeavors of middle-class Americans. If the physicians and scientists of the mind were prototypical, an examination of the rest of national life—as it is ordinarily subdivided—will also show that early twentieth-century Americans in their occupations and other social capacities operated on "Progressive" assumptions or at least were aware of the relevance of their activities to "Progressive" ends.[2] The basis for the hypothesis is the striking fact that reformers in psychiatry and psychology shared with reformers in politics and economics a set of social assumptions that indentified them all as Progressives.

From the more traditional research on the subject we already know the suppositions of Progressivism. The essence of the movement was the

[1] For a partial treatment of social control, see Stow Persons, *American Minds, A History of Ideas* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1958), chap. xxv, and Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence, A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), pp. 154-58.

[2] Each area also had its conservatives analogous to Aldrich and Taft.

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"firm belief that to a considerable degree man could make and remake his own world." [3] Although the Progressives did not all believe that man is inherently good, they agreed at least that the human being is malleable. The responsibility for the ills of the world rested, therefore, largely or entirely upon the social environment in which the individual lived.[4] Although modern environmentalism grew out of Darwinian thinking, the Progressives believed that man could change his own environment and so reconstruct both societies and individuals.[5]

The most elusive element in the basic social thinking of the Progressives was—who should tamper with the environment and so foreordain the fates of his fellow men? It turned out, inevitably, that the Progressives themselves were to be the self-appointed arbiters of man's destiny. They were able, literate and largely professional groups, accustomed to the role of leadership and, like Theodore Roosevelt, unafraid of it.[6]

The Progressives were consciously motivated by altruism. Direction was to come from the Man of Good Will who had transcended his own interests; he governed by right of his moral superiority.[7] The Calvinistic background of many Progressives indicated a direct relationship as well as an analogy between Progressive leadership and the stewardship of the elect. Social responsibility inspired in many Progressives a feeling of guilt for all of the evil that a faulty society had caused, and the sophisticated with New England consciences equated righteousness with social reform.[8]

[3] George E. Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, 1900-1912* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1958), pp. 17-18, 37.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 49-51. David W. Noble, *The Paradox of Progressive Thought* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), summarizes the views of the high priest of Progressivism, Herbert Croly, on the subject, p. 62.

[5] Eric F. Goldman, *Rendezvous with Destiny, A History of Modern American Reform* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), p. 94; Mowry, *Era of Theodore Roosevelt*, p. 50. Such thinking was not far distant from other doctrines of the times, such as an economic interpretation of history.

[6] Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform, From Bryan to F. D. R.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), has been pre-eminent in suggesting as a major factor in Progressivism the changing status of certain middle-class groups, chap. iv; and Mowry, *Era of Theodore Roosevelt*, has documented the middle-class nature of Progressive leadership, pp. 85 ff. (Psychiatrists and psychologists in general belonged to this dominant part of the middle class.) The Progressive reliance on the executive and the cult of the strong man were notable contemporaneous developments; *ibid.*, p. 88; Goldman, *Rendezvous with Destiny*, p. 80; Noble, *Paradox of Progressive Thought*, p. 74. Even the Progressives' faith in democracy was dependent upon their providing a proper environment for that democracy. See the sophisticated discussion of Progressivism in May, *End of American Innocence*, pp. 21-29.

[7] Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, p. 258; compare the summary in Mowry, *Era of Theodore Roosevelt*, pp. 104-5.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 87; Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, pp. 204-6, 208-12.

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These, then, were the elements of Progressivism—optimism, environmentalism, moral fervor and leadership by an enlightened elite. None of them was new in American thought, but at the time they took on a special meaning because of the frequency with which they appeared and because of their application to social control. Although most obvious in political and social thinking, they also characterized, first, the psychotherapy movement in the psychiatry of that day and, second, the revolt of the behaviorists in contemporaneous psychology. In each case it turned out that an autonomous historical development within a science contained the same elements as a new political and social movement.

Psychiatry (which at that time included neurology) provides a nice example. In the late nineteenth century, physicians who dealt with the mentally ill usually were "organicists" who adhered strictly to scientific materialism. They believed that behavior and thinking were but the expression of the functioning of the nervous system and that physical defects or diseases were at the bottom of all mental diseases. The organicists performed autopsies on the brains of deceased mental patients, searching for evidence of lesions or brain damage. The work of this group was vindicated by the discovery that a common type of insanity was caused by syphilis. Yet nothing is quite as depressing as the literature of psychiatry-neurology around the turn of the century—endless reports of post-mortem examinations of demented brains and discussions of the problems of keeping and managing the insane. The psychiatrist was expected to do little more than deliver a prognosis of the melancholy course of the disease and then supervise the housing, feeding and restraining of the patient.[9] Well into the twentieth century the three main causes of insanity were thought to be heredity, alcohol and syphilis.[10]

By the 1890's a great deal of discussion of hysteria (disease symptoms occurring in the absence of physical disease), hypnotism and faith healing, plus a rebellion against the dreary routine of prognosis and commitment, led to a revival of attention to so-called "moral treatment." Every experienced physician knew the importance of the patient's state of mind for the treatment of illness, and early in the first decade of the century, following developments in continental Europe, American medical practitioners took up the fad of psychotherapy. In large part the psychotherapy movement was a formal recognition of the medical value of a

[9] The cure rate was about twenty per cent; A. I. Noble, "The Curability of Insanity," *American Journal of Insanity*, LXIX (1913), 715-17.

[10] E.g., H. M. Swift, "Insanity and Race," *American Journal of Insanity*, LXX (1913), 154.

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constructive intellectual and emotional environment, especially in the treatment of what we would now call neurotic diseases.[11]

Strict organicists who believed that insanity was caused by heredity, alcohol and syphilis were not necessarily outside of the Progressive movement. There were reform groups dedicated to the elimination of the baneful effects of all three. The eugenics movement, advocating the sterilization of insane, defective and criminal persons in order to improve the race, represented the Progressive attempt to deal with that part of man which was not malleable.[12] Many psychiatrists supported the efforts of the prohibitionists to remove from commerce what they regarded as social poison. And one of the lasting reforms of Progressivism was effected by the crusaders (many of them physicians) who opposed both prostitution and promiscuity with the powerful argument that only prevention could control venereal diseases.[13] These were typical Progressive reform movements, but Progressive psychiatrists fought their finest—and most fundamental—battles in the name of psychotherapy.

Basically the physicians who employed or advocated psychotherapy in any of its many forms were unwilling to accept the pessimistic attitude of current psychiatry and neurology. Under the competitive pressure of Christian Science and other faith cures that were demonstrably effective, these physicians ignored materialism and undertook to cure patients by whatever method worked. Effective psychotherapy required hope—indeed, faith in the patient's ability to cure himself. C. P. Oberndorf, one of the first psychoanalytic psychotherapists in the United States, later attributed his early successes in treatment to his enthusiasm and to his confidence in the new tools with which he worked. Others using quite different methods of psychotherapy likewise showed an optimism that set them apart from conservatives in the psychiatric profession.[14]

11 See Walter Bromberg, *Man Above Humanity, A History of Psychotherapy* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1954), chap. viii.

12 Mark Hughlin Haller, "American Eugenics: Heredity and Social Thought, 1870-1930" (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1960), especially pp. 4, 157-58, shows how Progressives' assumptions of environmentalism did not deter them from supporting the eugenics movement.

13 For somewhat different views, see Louis Filler, *Crusaders for American Liberalism* (2d ed., Yellow Springs, Ohio: Antioch Press, 1950), chap. xxii, and Harold Underwood Faulkner, *The Quest for Social Justice, 1898-1914* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931), pp. 159-62.

14 C. P. Oberndorf, *A History of Psychoanalysis in America* (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1953), p. 152. E.g., see the revealing paper, Charles W. Burr, "The Prevention of Insanity and Degeneracy," *American Journal of Insanity*, LXXIV (1917), 409-24, and especially the discussion, 422-23.

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The basis for the new hope was the conviction that an individual's behavior was determined—to a large extent—by his environment. A Boston physician in 1909 defined psychoneurotics "as people who, for one reason or another, are not well adapted to their environment." The conclusion was obvious; as one psychiatrist observed in 1911, "If the mental habits and the surroundings of an individual are largely responsible for the onset of a psychosis, we can look forward to accomplishments which may rival the success achieved in the crusade against tuberculosis."[15]

The psychotherapists' primary objective became, then, to re-educate the patient so that he adapted himself to his environment, adjusted himself to the reality that surrounded him. Thoughtful physicians quickly perceived that the largest part of the environment that required the patient to change his conduct was the society in which he lived, including his family. A New York asylum superintendent reported in 1913 that "The patient is no longer regarded simply as a separate individual, but also as a social unit, whose cure cannot be considered complete until he has been restored to social adaptability and efficiency."[16] At the same time physicians saw the possibility of altering not just the patient but also his environment. Since the important environment was social, the forward-looking psychiatrists found themselves committed to social meliorism, and therefore were Progressives indeed.[17]

The environment of children was especially a target for the social-reformer psychiatrists. Under the influence of early Freudian ideas, they asserted that childhood experiences were of overwhelming importance in later life. The most influential of these psychiatrists was William Healy, a conventionally trained specialist in nervous and mental diseases, who gave up his practice (at considerable sacrifice) in 1909 to work with juvenile delinquents in Chicago. Through his own experience with the motivations of youthful lawbreakers, Healy came to a strongly psychoanalytic point of view. His works (richly illustrated with interesting case histories) persuaded untold numbers of persons that favorable changes

[15] Richard C. Cabot, "The Analysis and Modification of Environment," *Psychotherapy*, III, No. 3 (1909), 5. James V. May, "The Modern Trend of Psychiatry," *Interstate Medical Journal*, XVIII (1911), 1098.

[16] E.g., see the systematic work of Morton Price, "The Subconscious Setting of Ideas in Relation to the Pathology of the Psychoneuroses," *The Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, XI (1916), 1-18. William L. Russell, "The Widening Field of Practical Psychiatry," *American Journal of Insanity*, LXX (1913), 460. E.g., William A. White, *The Principles of Mental Hygiene* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1917), p. 316.

[17] E.g., C. C. Wholey, in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, LXII (1914), 1036. Thomas W. Salmon, "Some New Fields in Neurology and Psychiatry," *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, XLVI (1917), 90-99.

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in the social environments of youngsters could prevent delinquency and promote not only mental health but social progress.[18]

The presumptuousness of psychiatrists in deciding how the world should be run was not different from that of other Progressives. Like Dr. George Van Ness Dearborn of Boston, physicians appealed to "the sound principle of *noblesse oblige*." Moreover, as doctors they dealt with matters of life and death, and as psychotherapists in daily practice they undertook to interfere in and change the attitudes and ways of life of their patients. They were, therefore, accustomed to the responsibilities of leadership. As early as 1907 E. W. Taylor of Boston pointed out that the role of the physician was expanding and that he had to look after the social as well as the physical welfare of his patients. He was becoming, said Lewellys Barker of Johns Hopkins, the "moral director" of his patients.[19]

A number of theories were used by the psychotherapists in rationalizing their attempts to recast the world. A New York neurologist who advocated a type of psychotherapy called suggestion proposed in 1912 that physicians combat the psychic infections of civilization—noxious suggestion—with psychotherapy, that is, with suggestion that would foster what he believed to be the better cultural elements (surely an ambiguous goal for social control).[20] Most Americans were not strong on systematics, and hope sufficed to nourish many of their opinions; only those who used the most radical of the psychotherapies, psychoanalysis, invoked a fairly consistent theory to justify their reformism.[21]

The psychoanalysts, whose alleged commitment to a so-called "sexual"

[18] E.g., William Healy, *The Individual Delinquent: A Text-Book of Diagnosis and Prognosis for All Concerned in Understanding Offenders* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1915); William Healy, *Mental Conflicts and Misconduct* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1917), especally chap. xvii. Healy's case affords evidence of a situation in which political Progressives had a direct influence on the development of psychiatry. In an interview with the writer Dr. Healy remarked that the method of studying children (integrating medical, social, psychometric and psychiatric studies of a single individual) which yielded him such rich results was suggested in large part by a group of social reformers associated with Hull House and led by Jane Addams and Julia Lathrop, two of the best-known Progressives. The Hull House reformers found financial support for the work and invited Healy to undertake it.

[19] George Van Ness Dearborn, *The Influence of Joy* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1916), p. 35. E. W. Taylor, "The Attitude of the Medical Profession Toward the Psychotherapeutic Movement," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, CLVII (1907), 845-46. Lewellys F. Barker, "On the Psychic Treatment of Some of the Functional Neuroses," *International Clinics*, I (17th ser., 1907), 13, 15, 17.

[20] George W. Jacoby, *Suggestion and Psychotherapy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), chap. ii, especially pp. 207, 218-19.

[21] E.g., J. T. W. Rowe, "Is Dementia Praecox the 'New Peril' in Psychiatry?" *American Journal of Insanity*, LXIII (1907), 389, 393. Even most American psychoanalysists in this early period, it must be admitted, had less regard for theoretical consistency than their European counterparts.

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view of the world was notorious, illustrated most strikingly the intense moralism of the Progressive psychiatrists. By means of sublimation man's evil would be turned into good, they asserted; even the grossest sexual perversions would become artistic creations and love for fellow man. James Jackson Putnam, scion of the Puritans, married to a Cabot, and professor of neurology at Harvard, wrote: "It may well be urged that psychoanalysis does not take the cultivation of social ideals as an end for which it should directly strive. Technically, this is true. But psychoanalysts know well the evils that attend the over-assertion of personal desires, cultivated too exclusively in and for themselves, and the importance of the opposite course follows by inference." In their long, conventional textbook on nervous and mental diseases, two of the leading psychiatrists of the country, Smith Ely Jelliffe and William A. White, reminded their readers of the "socially useful ends" of psychotherapy. As sophisticated about right and wrong as the most advanced intellectual rebels of the time, Progressive psychiatrists found altruism medically justifiable.[22]

Some of the psychotherapists were psychologists who had abandoned strictly experimental psychology. Like the psychiatrists, these men tended to be lay preachers who sought to reform the world by means of re-education and retraining. The scholarly psychologist of Boston, L. E. Emerson, for example, repeatedly pointed out the ethical and reform possibilities of Freudianism. More orthodox psychologists were likewise led, when dealing with matters outside of experimental psychology, to dilate on the possibilities of fostering the "higher aspirations" of men through psychotherapy and psychoanalysis.[23] The best example of the foregoing is the famous book of E. B. Holt of Harvard on *The Freudian Wish and Its Place in Ethics*.[24] Holt asserted that Freudian psychology justified the ancient belief that knowledge is virtue, with the implication that evil need not be always with us. Holt saw man as an individual interacting with his environment and, significantly, utilized not only

[22] James J. Putnam, "The Psychoanalytic Movement," *Scientific American Supplement*, LXXVIII (1914), 391, 402. Freud commented regretfully on Putnam's inclination to make psychoanalysis "the servant of moral aims." Sigmund Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, trans. by James Strachey (2d ed., London: Hogarth Press, 1946), p. 94. Smith Ely Jelliffe and William A. White, *Diseases of the Nervous System, A Text-Book of Neurology and Psychiatry* (2d ed., Philadelphia: Lee & Febiger, 1917), p. 98. James J. Putnam, "On Some of the Broader Issues of the Psychoanalytic Movement," *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, CXLVII (1914), 397-402.

[23] E.g., Ernest K. Lindley, in *The Journal of the Indiana State Medical Association*, IX (1916), 7; Stephen S. Colvin, "What Dreams Mean," *The Independent*, LXXII (1912), 847.

[24] Edwin B. Holt, *The Freudian Wish and Its Place in Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1915).

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psychoanalytic psychology but also behaviorism. For within orthodox experimental psychology the Progressives were those who adhered to behaviorism.[25]

For years psychologists had been aware of ferment and discontent in their profession. Most of the criticism centered around the fact that dry, descriptive academic psychology was not useful. Then John B. Watson took leadership of the revolt of the behavioristic psychologists. They dispensed with consciousness and introspective methods and studied the human organism in its environment, using the methods of animal psychology. Watson began his behaviorist manifesto in 1913 by making the purpose of the revolt clear: "Psychology as the behaviorist views it is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science. Its theoretical goal is the *prediction and control of behavior*."[26] Here was usefulness with a vengeance.

The behaviorists had observed that animals' innate patterns of action could be modified by training, and the young Turks soon tended to embrace a radical environmentalism. Most psychologists more or less covertly subscribed to an instinct psychology such as that of William James or William McDougall. Now out of the laboratory itself came a challenge to essentially conservative nativism.[27] One would misunderstand behaviorism if he overlooked the explicit meliorism involved in the movement. Watson himself took pains to clarify the relation of behaviorism to social control, and the more alert members of the profession also realized what was involved.[28] The goal of behaviorism was, after all, merely a restatement of the classical purpose of any science including psychology: to predict. And prediction, to the Progressive behaviorists as to other scientists, involved control.[29]

The elements of Progressivism thus appeared as conspicuous features of reform movements within psychology and psychiatry. The mass of

[25] The social psychologies of men such as G. H. Mead and J. Mark Baldwin were too close to social philosophy to be properly included here. A case might be made, however, for including G. Stanley Hall and the genetic psychology of that time.

[26] John B. Watson, "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," *The Psychological Review*, XX (1913), 158; see also 168-69, 177. Italics added. For an interesting variation with Freudian elements, see John B. Watson and J. J. B. Morgan, "Emotional Reactions and Psychological Experimentation," *The American Journal of Psychology*, XXVIII (1917), 163-74.

[27] E.g., see M. E. Haggerty, "The Laws of Learning," *The Psychological Review*, XX (1913), 411; Howard C. Warren, "The Mental and the Physical," *ibid.*, XXI (1914), 99.

[28] E.g., see John B. Watson, "An Attempted Formulation of the Scope of Behavior Psychology," *ibid.*, XXIV (1917), 329-52; A. P. Weiss, "Relation Between Functional and Behavior Psychology," *ibid.*, pp. 353-68.

[29] See John Dewey, "The Need for Social Psychology," *ibid.*, pp. 274-75.

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material in both sciences remained, as before, primarily descriptive. But the social attitudes of some of the practitioners of the two disciplines led to profound changes in the very nature of psychiatry and psychology, just as Progressivism left its mark on American political and social institutions.

Progressive psychiatry and Progressive psychology were uniquely American phenomena. The European professional literature was devoid of the optimistic social reformism of the New World versions of these disciplines. Psychologist Carl Rahn shrewdly epitomized the situation in his observation about psychoanalysis: "Where the European follower of Freud emphasizes the point that the formulation of the symbol is indicative of a 'renunciation of reality,'" wrote Rahn, "the American disciple sees it as a 'carrier of energy' exquisitely fitted for increasing man's control over his environment. . . ."[30]

One can easily account for the rise of psychotherapy and the rise of behaviorism in terms of the internal histories of psychiatry and psychology. But the fact that these movements coincided in time with the Progressive social reform movement, and the fact that social control was an aim of reformers in both politics and science, can be accounted for only by treating the developments in psychiatry and psychology and in all other middle-class endeavors as part and parcel of the Progressive movement itself.[31] The historian will discover the full dynamics of Progressivism only when he examines not just politics, economics and social philosophy, but all aspects of American life.[32]

Afternote

A sequel to this article, tracing into the early 1930s the vicissitudes of the idea of using psychiatry and psychology for social control purposes, is J. C. Burnham, "The New Psychology: From Narcissism to Social Control," in Braeman, Bremner and Brody, eds., *The 1920's Revisited* (Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1966).

A major contention in the article reprinted here, that Progressive ideas had an impact on American culture far greater within nonpolitical than within

[30] See Edwin G. Boring, *A History of Experimental Psychology* (2d ed., New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1950), pp. 642-43. Carl Rahn, in a review of W. A. White, *Mechanisms of Character Formation,* in *The Psychological Bulletin,* XIV (1917), 327. The absence of a British counterpart is especially striking in view of the nearly contemporaneous reform movement there.

[31] The intellectual spokesmen for Progressivism were well aware of the possibilities of the new movements in psychiatry and psychology; e.g., see Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Politics* (New York: M. Kennerley, 1913).

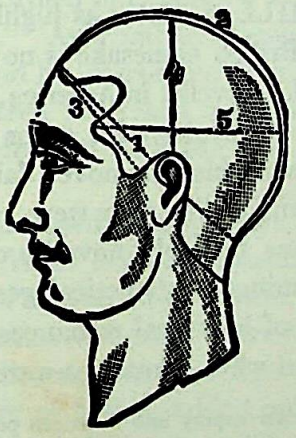
[32] Even though not focusing on Progressivism, May, *End of American Innocence,* gives an idea of the light that can be shed on the movement by an approach such as the one suggested here.

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political institutions and currents, is implicitly supported by the recent work of a number of writers on various fields, including Edwin Layton (engineering), A. G. Korman (industrial management), Roy Lubove (social work), Aaron Abell (religion), Lawrence Cremin (education).

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Richard . Beatrice K. Hofstadter

Winston Churchill: A Study in the Popular Novel[1]

I

WINSTON CHURCHILL, a writer as highly regarded during the Progressive era as his British namesake is now,[2] was for almost two decades the most popular novelist in America. In ten of the years between 1899 and 1917 his books were at or near the head of the best-seller lists. Only one of his nine novels failed to rank among the top ten; five led the annual list, two were second, one was third.[3] Churchill, moreover, was the only novelist of this period to write successfully in two seemingly antithetical genres. His first triumph came during the vogue of historical romances that flourished at the turn of the century; and when romances were superseded by politi-

[1] This essay, as well as a larger inquiry into American popular culture, has been made possible by a grant to the senior author from the Columbia University Council for Research in the Social Sciences. The authors are also indebted to Mildred Sanes for material assistance.

[2] On the friendly relationship between the two Churchills, and for other biographical information, see Frederick Brinker Irvin, "The Didacticism of Winston Churchill" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1947).

[3] Alice Payne Hackett, *Fifty Years of Best Sellers, 1895–1945* (New York: Bowker, 1945), pp. 11ff. According to Miss Hackett's estimates, Churchill's leading sellers reached these totals: *The Crisis*, 1,061,000; *Richard Carvel*, 736,000; *The Inside of the Cup*, 507,000. Frank Luther Mott, in his study of best sellers, *Golden Multitudes* (New York: Macmillan, 1948) 212, calls Churchill "the great popular novelist of middle-class American readers." Irving Hart describes him as the "premier popular novelist" in "The Most Popular Authors of Fiction between 1900 and 1925," *Publishers' Weekly*, vol. 107, pp. 619–21 (February 21, 1925). For further information on Churchill's popularity and the relative circulation of his novels, see Hart, *Publishers' Weekly*, vol. 99, pp. 269–72 (January 29, 1921); vol. 107, pp. 525–27 (February 14, 1925); and vol. 111, pp. 473–77 (February 5, 1927).

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cal and problem novels, he continued to please the book-reading public in the new medium.

If we can assume that a popular writer's appeal is a commentary on the needs or desires of his public, Churchill provides an exceptional insight into his generation. Reading then had a more central place than it now holds, and the popular novel was probably more important as a reflection of the public imagination. Churchill is a singularly felicitous writer to begin with, not merely because his popularity was so great, but because his novels were meant to be serious inquiries into the major problems of his age, not idle fantasies. It would be a mistake to assume because Churchill made a fortune from his books that he was a cynical businessman of letters. Many contemporary critics thought him a serious writer,[4] and we have every reason to believe that he accepted their evaluation. A contemporary credited him with being "close to American thought and feeling"; his success was often attributed to his sincerity. "The art of literature," he affirmed in *Coniston*, "consists largely in belief in what one is writing."[5] As a public moralist he felt that he had large responsibilities, and he interpreted them literally and in detail. ("Many a girl of nineteen has taken a novel for a guide when she has been suddenly confronted with the first great problem outside her experience."[6])

Churchill may be dismissed as a novelist, but he cannot be dismissed as a symptom. What fails as literature is frequently significant as self-revelation or as a social document — a fact which is quite as pertinent to several other writers of Churchill's era who have been accorded much more literary stature. One critic, remarking that Churchill was no master of fiction, added quite properly: "The important thing in Mr. Churchill's books is himself, his point of view."[7] And the point of view — that of a moralist absorbed in the dichotomy between business values and human values — was one that engaged

[4] Carl Van Doren, for example, did Churchill the honor of including him, albeit with a rather critical discussion, in his *Contemporary American Novelists* (New York: Macmillan, 1922); see, however, Van Doren's *The American Novel, 1789–1939* (New York: Macmillan, 1946) 260–61. In 1924 H. L. Mencken ranked Churchill with "many another man and woman of great promise" whose bones now bleached upon the beach alongside Upton Sinclair's. "The American Novel," reprinted in Morton Dauwen Zabel, ed., *Literary Opinion in America* (New York: Harper, 1937) 104.

[5] *Coniston* (New York: Macmillan, 1906) 284.

[6] *Ibid.*, 338.

[7] *New York Times*, June 6, 1915, sec. 5.

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an entire generation with a special urgency. The poignancy of this dichotomy for seriously creative writers in America is a familiar theme; in Churchill there is convincing evidence that it also existed on the subliterary level.

II

Churchill's generation, which came of age in the 90s, experienced many modern problems with particular intensity. American history, up to the close of the nineteenth century, was an immense conquest compounded by an immense boom. Generations of transcontinental advance and settlement—and in particular the great age of industrial expansion that was passing—had pitched the national scale of material achievement on a now impossibly exalted level. By the 90s, when the railroad lines had been substantially built and the foundation of the country's industrial plant had been laid, the sacking of the continent seemed to be slowing down. How much still remained to be done it is easy to see sixty years afterward, but to the generation of the 90s, indulging in the long retrospective glance that was encouraged by the closing of the century and was symbolized at the Chicago Fair in 1893, it seemed only too clear that the adventurous possibilities of American industry and the American continent had been exhausted. The feeling that the nation had reached some critical juncture was heightened by persistent Populist and labor outcries. What might have been merely an age of national stocktaking became a moment of crisis when the panic of 1893 and the ensuing depression brought the discontented to a pitch of rebellious frenzy and shattered the nerves of even the secure.

It was at this point that the traditional American expectation of epic achievement fell heavily upon the rising generation. Many a young American felt helpless before the demands which the careers of his elders implicitly made of him for personal achievement worthy of American tradition. The actual conditions of life seemed to provide no area for such exploits—at least not in the directing and organizing world of business which demanded confident and masterful personalities. In a civilization which had, as John Jay Chapman remarked, "destroyed the very knowledge in us of all other natural forces except business,"[8] opportunities for pecuniary adventure on

[8] *Practical Agitation* (New York: Scribner, 1900) 56.

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the heroic model of the Rockefellers, Carnegies, and Hills seemed to have died.

In psychic self-defense many sons and daughters of the middle class, and even of the rich, were driven to condemn what they could not emulate. The society their fathers had left them was vulnerable on several counts, the corruption of its civic life, the brutality and sordidness of its business and industry, its philistinism. Political or humanitarian reform, social settlements, the social gospel, imperialist adventure,[9] Bohemianism, literature and the arts—any of these might be acceptable as an alternative to fitting complaisantly into the scheme of things, so long as it provided a motive for working and believing that was not tainted with conformity or acquisitiveness.

Politically conscious people wanted a hero who could turn his back upon the ethics of trade, display sterling honesty and aggressive patriotism (even chauvinism if need be), condemn the worst abuses of industrialism, and yet preserve the air of heroic effort. What Theodore Roosevelt did for his generation was to show that there was something yet to be done, to demonstrate the continued possibility of a vigorous personal life and a potent and honest civic life in America. Churchill, who admired and followed T.R. in practical politics,[10] was in some respects his literary equivalent; he had a similar reverence for the American past, the same admiration for honorable old-family stock and old-family motives, the same contempt for the business mind, and the same weakness for wholesome and harmless clichés.

But while politics was a man's world, the novel-reading public was overwhelmingly feminine. It was Churchill's function as a novelist for a female public that was becoming more and more concerned with men's affairs to refract the problems of the age from the point of view of women. Harold Lasswell, in his brilliant inquiry into *Psychopathology and Politics*, has advanced a relevant formula for the relation between private and public affairs. According to Lasswell, private motives are frequently diverted to public objects and ration-

[9] Imperialism was opposed, as T.R. pointed out in his *Autobiography*, by "the big financiers and the men generally who were susceptible to touch on the money nerve, and who cared nothing for national honor if it conflicted even temporarily with business prosperity."

[10] Austen Vane, hero of Churchill's *Mr. Crewe's Career* (New York: Macmillan, 1908), with his instinctive talent for leadership, his out-of-doors personality, and his western ranching background might have been modeled directly on Roosevelt.

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alized by the individual into public ideologies.[11] In some measure Churchill's gift as a popular "serious" writer rested in his ability to invert this formula; in his books political and social problems and ideologies are translated into the family sphere and reformulated as the private problems of his characters.

III

In Churchill's early life, the influences that molded his generation seem condensed and intensified. He was born in 1871 in St. Louis, a center of the expanding railroad economy, where new fortunes were common. On both sides he was descended from prominent families with illustrious colonial forebears, but his parents died when he was an infant, leaving him in the care of an aunt who seems to have had no more than a moderate income. By virtue of his family's position his boyhood friends were children of prominent and wealthy men, and most of them went east to college as a matter of course. Churchill went to work in a warehouse instead. The scars of his early frustrations are to be found in most of the novels: his heroes and heroines are descended from families "that by right of priority and service should have been destined to inherit the land";[12] at least one leading character in each book is an orphan; and in *A Far Country* the hero, "feeling that a fine instrument was being employed where a coarser one would have done equally well,"[13] also works in a warehouse while his friends go off to eastern colleges. Clearly, business became a personal enemy to Churchill—"galley slavery I deemed it, humdrum, prosaic, degrading"[14]—long before the failings of a business society became a commonplace to the majority of his generation.

After three years Churchill managed to get an appointment to the Naval Academy at Annapolis. Hardly the school he would have chosen, it did promise a career outside of the business world and offered the rudiments of a higher education. But Navy mathematics and discipline irked him, and he resigned shortly after graduation to work on various journals. After his marriage to a St. Louis girl of a prominent and wealthy family, he was able to devote himself to

[11] *Psychopathology and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930); see especially chap. 5.
[12] *The Dwelling Place of Light* (New York: Macmillan, 1917) 2.
[13] *A Far Country* (New York: Macmillan, 1915) 68.
[14] *Ibid.*, 54.

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writing. Four years later, in 1899, his second book, *Richard Carvel*, was published, and as a reporter later remarked, "Richard Carvel, the ideal, and Winston Churchill, the real, sprang into frame together."[15]

With the royalties from *Richard Carvel* Churchill bought land in New Hampshire and built a house suggesting "an old time colonial estate," in which hewn timbers, given "the appearance of great age" by "a French expert," were exposed to view.[16] *Richard Carvel*, a costume drama set in Maryland at the time of the Revolution, was followed by *The Crisis*, a novel of St. Louis in the Civil War, and *The Crossing*, an adventure story celebrating the conquest of Kentucky and the exploits of George Rogers Clark. Each of the historical romances was freighted with much historical detail, carefully researched and patriotically retold, and woven around a love story.

In the Afterword of *The Crossing*, written in 1903, Churchill indicated that he planned a series of books celebrating "that great movement across the mountains which swept resistless over the continent until at last it saw the Pacific itself."[17] No doubt the series was projected in the same romantic vein that had been winning such a large audience for Churchill and other writers for several years. But the vogue of romance was passing, and Churchill himself seems to have been growing restless with his medium. In this same Afterword, phrases like "it was a difficult task," "I have a great sense of its incompleteness," frequently occur, suggesting an uneasy note.

As Churchill remarked in a later novel, "imaginative production could not be classed as hard work" in America, and businessmen "put literature in the same category as embroidery."[18] Much as Churchill deplored this attitude, he had absorbed some of it. Even while writing the romances, he had felt called upon to justify his activities in a commonly approved fashion by clothing them with the habits of the business office. A publicity pamphlet issued by his publisher in 1906 reported: "While he was living in St. Louis . . . he hired a room in an office building, went down to it every morning,

[15] G. A. Cheney, "Winston Churchill and Harlakenden House," *Granite Monthly*, vol. 33, p. 131 (September 1902). Churchill's first book was a novella, *The Celebrity*.

[16] *Ibid.*, 135.

[17] *The Crossing* (New York: Macmillan, 1927). This volume was originally published in 1904; page references throughout this article are to the later edition.

[18] *A Far Country*, 62; *Mr. Crewe's Career*, 162.

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and worked as regularly as if he had a set of books to keep."[19] The need to justify the romances by some kind of utility weighed upon him. He insisted that his books were not mere tales; his stated purpose in writing them was one "of interesting people in history and tempting them to read it further for themselves."[20] To this end he did much laborious research, and he was acutely sensitive to any questioning of his accuracy.[21]

To his contemporaries, the change from historical romances to novels of political protest seemed "the passage of the great gulf between romance and realism . . . which blotted out a dreamer and gave us a seer by the waters of our everyday Babylon."[22] But there was implicit in the romances themselves a protest against the very type of character and motive about which Churchill was later so explicit a critic. Just as the political novels are strung upon romantic plots, so there is latent political content in the romances. When Churchill was writing them he already had his grievances and, like one of his later heroes, "longed for a Cause into which I might fling myself."[23] Written at a time when pecuniary motives for work had been widely discredited, his novels reflect the quest for a new work ethic based not on money but on the need for personal integrity and civic morale.

The most esteemed qualities in his romantic heroes are not distinctly romantic ones. Richard Carvel, in the first three quarters of the book, seems only a more skillful swordsman and a more elegant dandy than his companions, but when he is cheated of his inheritance by an unscrupulous uncle he does not issue a challenge to a duel, as one might expect a romantic hero to do, but takes for several years a rather menial job as a plantation overseer. "You have proved yourself a man, Richard, and there are very few macaronies [Maryland fops] would have done as you did."[24] Similarly the heroine is at length given an opportunity to prove herself when her father loses his fortune. She refuses help from friends, preferring "to cook Maryland

[19] *Winston Churchill, A Sketch of His Life and Work* (New York: Macmillan, 1906) 6.
[20] *Ibid.*, 11.
[21] Winston Churchill, "Concerning *Richard Carvel*," *Bookman*, vol. 9, pp. 403–5 (1899).
[22] Peter C. Macfarlane, "The Evolution of A Novelist: Who is also an Everyday American," *Collier's*, vol. 52, p. 6 (December 27, 1913).
[23] *A Far Country*, 95.
[24] *Richard Carvel* (New York: Macmillan, 1899) 438.

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dainties for a living, to put in the hands of the footmen of the ladies whose houses they once visited."[25] In *The Crisis* and *The Crossing* Churchill is still more explicit. The heroine of *The Crisis* tells her southern lover: "We have been gentlemen too long. And what has your life been? . . . A mixture of gamecocks and ponies . . . and idleness. What do you know? You wouldn't go to college. You wouldn't study law. You can't write a decent letter. You don't know anything about the history of your country. Max, if you would only work at something. That is why the Yankees beat us."[26]

Amid the pageantry of these early stories the image of the avaricious businessman emerges with growing clarity of outline. In *Richard Carvel* the American Revolution is precipitated by "a headstrong king, backed by unscrupulous followers who held wealth above patriotism."[27] In the foreground of the novel the villainous Grafton shares with the later businessman stereotype avarice and unscrupulousness. In *The Crisis* a Yankee villain appears who is clearly a prototype of Churchill's later business characters. His purpose in this novel, Churchill wrote, was "to show the remarkable contrasts" between "the two great streams of emigration"[28] that met in St. Louis —the southern Cavalier and the northern Puritan. However, the virtues he ascribes to both the New England hero and the southern heroine are identical; the real moral contrast is between the hero and the Yankee businessman.

Although the drive toward public usefulness was fundamental in Churchill even during the period of his romances, he looked upon his entrance into politics as a sudden conversion. "The sordid ugliness of present-day politics"[29] was thrust upon him, he said, and "indignation got me into it, sheer indignation as a citizen."[30] In 1903 he announced his candidacy for the New Hampshire legislature on a

[25] P. 503. Cf. T.R. in his Strenuous Life speech on "the hard contests where men must win at the hazard of their lives and at the risk of all they hold dear." There is much resemblance to the qualities of the heroes of the romances in those virtues that T.R. began to preach during the 90s as an antidote to pessimism, cynicism, and defeatism — "the essential manly virtues of energy, of resolution, and of indomitable personal courage." Note also T.R.'s disdain for "educated men of weak fiber," "the cynic, fop, or voluptuary." (Theodore Roosevelt, *Works* (New York: Scribner, 1926), vol. 13, pp. 35–46, *passim.*)

[26] *The Crisis* (New York: Macmillan, 1901) 69.

[27] P. 234.

[28] P. 521.

[29] Macfarlane, "The Evolution of a Novelist," 6.

[30] Quoted in Irvin, "The Didacticism of Winston Churchill," 6.

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typically Progressive platform, which included demands for railroad property evaluation and a corrupt practices act. He was elected in 1903 and again in 1905. His public impulses, like T.R.'s, passed readily from the mood of *The Crisis* and *The Crossing* and that of San Juan Hill to the world of mortgages, bribes, and railroad rates.

His experiences in the New Hampshire legislature moved him to write *Coniston*, a novel about the rise of a political boss and his subsequent struggle with a railroad combine over the control of the legislature and the consolidation of railroads. *Mr. Crewe's Career*, which followed, presented an even stronger indictment of the corruption of politics by railroad interests. Actually Churchill's attention was never wholly absorbed by simple misuse of political power; in the middle of *Coniston* he changed his focus to the businessmen who had taken over the boss system. These books do not take place in the 1900s, but in the 1870s and 80s. Neither the boss in *Coniston* (modeled directly on a New Hampshire politician) nor the political agent of the railroads in *Mr. Crewe's Career* is as ruthless as the businessman with whom each is compared. Both politicians repent their sins and are forgiven, but neither businessman does so.

Churchill is quoted by one reporter as saying that by this time he was beginning to see "something more fundamental than the political fabric—the social fabric, which led to the religious."[31] His first "social" novel, *A Modern Chronicle*, purported to discuss divorce, but Churchill handled it as merely another version of the basic difficulty, "money, money, money and its standards, and the things people are willing to do for it."[32] *The Inside of the Cup*, his next book, was a social gospel novel. It caused a tremendous stir; people were violently for or against its arguments, men as prominent as Admiral A. T. Mahan wrote diatribes against its "plausible caricature of the inner spirit of Christianity,"[33] it was discussed in pulpits throughout the country. Churchill had undergone a kind of religious conversion in the years between 1908 and 1912. This book, for which he was hailed in many places as "a reformer and a seer," was an exposition of his new ideas superimposed on his old one.

In *A Far Country* Churchill tried to internalize the central conflict

[31] Macfarlane, "The Evolution of a Novelist," 24.
[32] *A Modern Chronicle* (New York: Macmillan, 1910) 306.
[33] "*The Inside of the Cup*," *Churchman*, vol. 108, p. 290 (1913).

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in the hero; through most of the book the usually clear-minded type is misguided but comes to his senses when he nearly loses his wife and children because he has neglected them in his pursuit of money. By 1915 Churchill had become acquainted with Marxian socialism, and although he did not agree with its solution, he did accept its formulization of the class struggle. His last novel, *The Dwelling Place of Light,* centers about a strike and deals sympathetically with the workers. There is also a good deal, in a mystic vein, about a Christlike figure who rises above the struggle.

Here he departed from his public, turning to the study of "The Psychology of the Gospel Doctrine." By 1922 he was beginning to turn against his former work—"I am not particularly proud of my novels"[34]—and in 1945, shortly before he died, he repudiated it entirely: "I never thought much of books anyway. . . . I am really a dead author, and never was much of a living one. . . . I have utterly changed my views about the romantic novel, and I am very glad that my own are out of print."[35]

IV

At the core of Churchill's novels is a triangular conflict, at once personal and ideological, the resolution of which triumphantly asserts the moral superiority of the younger generation. At two corners of this triangle are the stereotypes of the Hero and the Heroine; at the third is the Businessman as Father. A father, in the Churchillian formula, represents the established order—money-centered, corrupt, powerful. A son or daughter embodies social morality, civic virtue, personal integrity—the germs of the new order, "the springing of a generation of ideals from a generation of commerce."[36]

The struggle takes the form of both an ideological debate and a contest for the allegiance of the businessman's daughter.[37] Churchill's fathers, who serve primarily as objects of rebellion, never manage to

[34] Quoted in J. Breckenridge Ellis, "Missourians Abroad—No. 11, Winston Churchill," *Missouri Historical Review,* vol. 16, p. 519 (1922).

[35] Quoted in Irvin, "The Didacticism of Winston Churchill," 50–51.

[36] *Mr. Crewe's Career,* 53.

[37] This formula is naturally a simplified abstraction, but it essentially represents the plots of the later novels and is present in embryo in the romances. In three novels, *Richard Carvel, Mr. Crewe's Career,* and *The Inside of the Cup,* it exists in pure form, and in the others with variations. In *A Far Country,* written when Churchill's own children were adolescent, hero and villain are two aspects of the same person; the wife leaves her husband when he is bad and takes him back when he is converted.

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impose their wills on the heroine or hero. In the psychological drama of Churchill's novels the younger generation achieves a victory similar to that for which the Progressives contended in the arena of practical politics. In Churchill's world "the mission of the [son] was to tear down what the [father] had so laboriously built up"; the daughter "was not only of another generation but might almost have been judged of another race than her parents."[38]

In all the characters who represent the evils of business life, and for these portraits Churchill was credited with "realism," public sin is linked with private transgression. Crimes against the public—manipulation of stocks, exploitation of workers, bribery of politicians—do provide the settings of the books, but the bulk of the stories is devoted to illustrating that business behavior is opposed to Christian values, that material gratification and spiritual development are mutually exclusive.[39] It was in the sphere of family life that Churchill saw the failures of worldly success dramatized, and the family became his repository of "real" values. Evidently his feminine audience took some satisfaction in his portrait of the businessman as "that superfluous and awkward and utterly banal individual, the husband." Whatever the circumstances, the magnate is incapable of being a good husband. If his wife shares his aspirations, she soons finds that he is closer to his "cronies" than to her, that he regards his home "as a launching place, the ways of which are carefully greased, that he may slide off to business every morning with as little friction as possible." If she does not share his values she either resigns herself ("How happy we used to be together before we were rich"), wilts, and dies, or asserts herself by leaving him.[40]

As a father, Churchill's businessman is neglectful or autocratic.

[38] *Mr. Crewe's Career*, 5–6, 13–14, 15, 22, 54, 56, 329, 376, and *passim*.

[39] There was one type of businessman that Churchill did admire. He considered James E. Yeatman of St. Louis, to whom he dedicated *Richard Carvel*, "the flower of the American tradition." Yeatman was notorious among businessmen for his honesty, and conspicuous for charity and public service. His charitable gifts were so numerous that he had little left at his death besides his library. Churchill modeled Calvin Brinsmade of *The Crisis* after him. On Yeatman, see the *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 20, pp. 606–7. In common with many other American protest novelists Churchill exempted the small businessman from his scorn and portrayed several favorably. Our composite image of the Churchillian businessman includes two corporation lawyers.

[40] *A Modern Chronicle*, 159, 174; *Coniston*, 481. In several of the following paragraphs multiple quotations from Churchill are located in one footnote in the order in which they appear in the text.

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His ambitions for his children are conceived in terms of his own career, and he violently opposes any deviation.[41] If he is forced to choose between his child's welfare and his pursuit of money, his decision is preordained: "Long habit had accustomed Hilary Vane to put business considerations before family ties." The son resents his father's success. One of the characters, asked as a boy, "Are you the son of Dudley Worthington?" replies: "Everybody asks me that. . . . I'm tired of it. When I grow up they'll have to stop it." "But you should be proud of your father." "I'm proud of him, everybody's proud of him—he's proud of himself. That's enough, ain't it?" Another son's "young mind [is] engaged in a ceaseless struggle for self-expression . . . against the inertia of a tradition of which my father was the embodiment. I grew unconsciously to regard him as my enemy."[42]

Ugly as the businessman's character is at the beginning, it worsens as his fortune betters. "His thin-lipped mouth . . . had been tightening year after year as the output of the Worthington Mills increased." He begins to wonder "what had become of that capacity for enjoyment which in my youth had been so keen." When he finally moves into a mansion, which Churchill takes to be the goal of every materialist, it seems to mock him: "You have built me . . . but I am stronger than you, because you have not earned me." If, after the plot has run its course, the businessman remains unwilling to recognize the goals of the younger generation, he is left alone amid "the horrors of the luxury of hell."[43]

Churchill's hero, his champion of moral values, is less a character than a personification of negative functions of the businessman's characteristics; thus, in spite of the ostensible differences in the problems with which the heroes are concerned, they tend to fade into each other and become a kind of composite man. Churchill's own identification with his heroes is marked; besides the orphanhood and genealogy with which he endowed them, they grew older as he did, although they were generally five years younger than he.

Starting with physical detail—the businessman gets "fat and bald," but "at five and forty there was not one ounce of superfluous

[41] See *Coniston*, 345; *Mr. Crewe's Career*, chap. 3; *The Inside of the Cup* (New York: Macmillan, 1913) 85, 481, 499, and *passim*; *The Dwelling Place of Light*, 197.

[42] *Mr. Crewe's Career*, 263; *Coniston*, 100; *A Far Country*, 14.

[43] *Coniston*, 96; *A Far Country*, 341; *ibid.*, 345; *The Inside of the Cup*, 502.

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flesh on [the hero's] hard body" — there is a series of carefully ranged minor contrasts between the two types. The hero "nearly always fell into conversations" with people on streetcars, "and it was noticeable that they nearly always shook hands with him at parting"; "you'd never catch" a businessman "bein' that common." Churchill's summary of the ideal male in his last novel shows how delicate a balance between the aristocratic and the democratic he tried to strike: "the contradictions he presented [were] of youth and age, of shrewdness, experience and candour, of gentility and manual toil. He must have been about thirty-five; he was hatless, and his hair, uncombed but not unkempt, was greying at the temples . . . his speech was colloquial yet cultivated, his workman's clothes belied his bearing."[44]

There are two crucial points of difference in the attitudes of the two types. The first, of course, concerns money. The hero is given an easy opportunity to get rich — "These things would be given to him, if he would but confine his worship to the god of wealth" — so that his rejection cannot be said to be based on envy. To the hero "money was a medium only — not an end"; when his father threatens to disinherit him, he replies, "I will tell you honestly that I regret the necessity of quarrelling with you more than I do the money." The second difference, which is actually put forward as a corollary of the first, is in attitudes toward women. Conventional men "believe that women were made to look at, and to play with"; the hero treats all women with more than superficial respect and considers superior women his equals in all matters. He is never so shallow as to fall in love at first sight; his attraction to the heroine is moral rather than physical; he feels "not love, but an unnamed sentiment for one whom I clothed with gifts and attributes I admired."[45]

It is an amusing comment on Churchill's antithesis that the idea of the self-made man is treated as a myth in connection with the businessman but is taken seriously in connection with the heroes. The "poor boy" argument is something the big businessman pulls out at banquets as a source of psychic comfort.[46] But the heroes, because of their orphaned condition, combine the qualities of promi-

[44] *A Modern Chronicle*, 187; *The Inside of the Cup*, 434; *A Modern Chronicle*, 52; *Coniston*, 139; *The Dwelling Place of Light*, 60.

[45] *Coniston*, 346; *Mr. Crewe's Career*, 8; *Coniston*, 480; *The Crisis*, 72–73; *The Crossing*, 518.

[46] *The Inside of the Cup*, 336.

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nent family background with a somewhat handicapped beginning. They are all professional men, usually lawyers, and in a limited sense the effort that goes into their training qualifies them as self-made; they are often doubly self-made in the sense that they have spurned easier but less moral opportunities.[47]

In many ways the heroine is the crucial figure in the triangle. She is an idealized self-image for American women, her character a pious affirmation of the qualities they value, her destiny a fantasy of every good girl's future. Women were rapidly emerging from the home into the larger world of men. In Churchill's heroine the struggle for this larger role is motivated by a contempt for the values of the preceding generation equal to and sometimes surpassing the hero's. "The most extraordinary thing about her," says Churchill, "is her contempt for what her father has gained, and for conventionalities. [She is] the Goddess of Liberty."[48] The form her espousal of new values takes, however, is not the pursuit of a career but the free choice of a husband whose ideology concurs with and supports her opposition to her father. At the end of each book she is guaranteed marital happiness because she has rejected the domination of a materialistic father and chosen a moral man.

All this demands a high moral stature; and the heroine adds to idealism qualities that make her the equal of men, or in many respects their superior. Her physical traits suggest her personality; she is tall and lithe, she has dignity and stature. A description of the French countess in *The Crossing* is essentially a description of all the heroines, including the last, a stenographer who has an illegitimate baby. No matter what her age, she is never an ingénue, but at fifteen looks as if she "might have lived for ages." It is a beauty "upon whose eternal freshness industry made no mar," even in one instance after ten years and numerous childbearings as the wife of a pioneer in the Kentucky mountains. In any situation, the heroine remains calm, always with "her temper under better control" than her father's; she "herself was sometimes surprised by her ability to remain outwardly calm." French countess or New England villager, she uniformly wears a "pretty, simple" gown. She is physically active, versatile and competent, has "that courage that seems woman's

[47] See especially *Coniston*, 484.
[48] *The Inside of the Cup*, 98.

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alone." Unlike the fainting Victorian woman, the heroine is continually springing into action, among other things rescuing a child from a battlefield and killing an Indian with an ax. Several plots require that she nurse her lover or father through a grievous illness (nursing scenes provide physical intimacy within the safe bounds of a maternal relationship), and without training or experience, she is completely competent. Indeed she exults in the chance to prove herself: "Oh Richard . . . How delightful that you should be the helpless one, and dependent on me."[49]

Virginia Carvel, in *The Crisis*, speaks for all the Churchill girls when she tells her father: "I don't want to go to balls all my life. I want to go to boarding school, and learn something."[50] Every heroine believes that "we women were created for a higher purpose than mere beauty. The Lord gave us brains, and meant that we should use them." Neither father nor lover dictates her judgments; she needs no sanction other than her own intelligence and moral force. But she does not originate social theories or initiate political action; like Churchill's wife, who managed his campaigns, she confines herself to the support of her hero. She also does some charitable work, not only giving money but engaging in an amateur variety of social work. She is definitely not a career woman,[51] nor is she "a sociologist and a militant suffragette"; her highest praise comes from a country woman who says she will "make a good wife for somebody." She is a feminine feminist, "one that might have governed a province and yet still have been a woman." Although each heroine wishes at least once that she were a man, although each possesses a "quality which, in a man, leads to a career and fame" ("Unimagined numbers of America's women possess that quality—a fact that is becoming more and more apparent every day"[52]), Churchill considers the home the proper field for her talents.

Within the home, however, she is to be accorded much deference

[49] *Coniston*, 287; *The Crossing*, 230; *The Inside of the Cup*, 88; *The Dwelling Place of Light*, 150; *The Crisis*, 256; *Richard Carvel*, 521.

[50] P. 81. Even the prostitute in *The Inside of the Cup* has "a mind."

[51] Only three heroines have jobs, and only one, Alison Parr in *The Inside of the Cup*, has a "career." She had been a distinguished landscape gardener before the book opens, but gave it up because "I saw myself with the advancing years becoming tawdry and worn," "I wanted peace and protection." (P. 461.)

[52] *Coniston*, 313; *The Dwelling Place of Light*, 390; *Mr. Crewe's Career*, 115; *The Crossing*, 433; *A Modern Chronicle*, 250.

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by her husband, and her authority over her children is to be enlarged.[53] She has one distinct advantage as a woman, an omnicompetent intuition, on which she can and does depend heavily. She is an "elemental" woman, "a mixture of innocence and astuteness," the "eternal feminine of all the ages," who is "in touch with fundamentals. She is one of those women who are race-makers." At many crucial moments, particularly in romantic situations, she demonstrates that "a woman's instinct . . . is often the best of understanding." "Stephen, for his life, could not utter a word. But Virginia turned to him with perfect self-possession." Or again, "all he could do was to sit foolishly in his chair. . . . It was Cynthia who broke the silence and took command." Innumerable times the hero says he is "a bungler" beside the girl in question. And always, whatever the actual difference in their status may be (usually the hero is temporarily less wealthy or of a lower class than the heroine), the hero asks himself: "Who was I . . . to aspire to the love of such a creature?" The heroine who is seduced asks herself afterward: "Was it a lack all women felt in men? [Were they] merely the perplexed transmitters of life? — not life itself?" [54]

Contempt for money is even more central to the ideal woman than to the ideal man. The hero rejects money on ideological grounds, because of the sufferings of others, while the heroine adds to this morality the price of her own independence. Luxuries are the bribes given to women for their subservience. Because the heroine refuses them, because "the things for which her mother had striven she took for granted, and thought of them not at all," because she feels "a fine scorn for the woman who . . . would insist upon a bond and ask a man's worldly goods in return for that which it was her privilege to give freely," she is able to free herself from the limiting standards of middle-class society. Churchill adds: "No lady is in the least interesting if restricted and contented with her restrictions — a fact which the ladies of our nation are fast finding out. What would

[53] Churchill gave the role of the mother enormous deference. "The one never failing test of a son . . . lies in his treatment of his mother." (*Richard Carvel*, 199.) "Unless there be in the background a mother, no portrait of a man is complete." (*The Inside of the Cup*, 30.) Often mothers make it possible to explain how materialistic fathers can have idealistic sons: "If Isaac D. Worthington had but chosen a worldly wife, he might have had a more worldly son." (*Coniston*, 346.)

[54] *Coniston*, 300; *ibid.*, 243; *A Far Country*, 253; *Richard Carvel*, 245; *The Crisis*, 164; *Coniston*, 360; *The Crossing*, 529; *The Dwelling Place of Light*, 258.

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become of the Goddess of Liberty? And let us mark well . . . that Liberty is a goddess, not a god . . . [and] not a haus frau." The heroine "could be happy in a farm-house where I had to do all the work . . . with the right man" but she will not be "a mere puppet to advertise [her husband's] prosperity."[55] What Churchill calls the heroine's unconventionality is not what we might expect it to be, but is rather a disregard for the formalities of conventional manners, which is meant to symbolize her disregard for the aspirations of the women who practice them.

Churchill was confident that once his hero overcame the obstacles that stood between him and the heroine, "it was his destiny to make the world better, and hers to help him." A hero who firmly believes that "the meaning of life [is] service," who is "emancipated from possessions," and a heroine who can play a woman's role with self-respect and self-confidence, and function as the fulcrum of a happy family, would of course be able to teach their children "to think straight, to avoid the pitfalls." Here there can be "harmony, life as it should proceed, the new growing out of the old."[56] By some undefined process, families like these would act as a kind of moral elite, influencing perhaps by the example of their lives social change and social progress, improving the lot of the poor and the characters of the rich.

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[55] *Mr. Crewe's Career*, 14; *The Dwelling Place of Light*, 163; *A Modern Chronicle*, 186; *Mr. Crewe's Career*, 395; *A Modern Chronicle*, 381.

[56] *Mr. Crewe's Career*, 495; *The Inside of the Cup*, 368; *The Dwelling Place of Light*, 367; *A Far Country*, 508; *The Dwelling Place of Light*, 58.

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A Hero: The Cowboy



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David Brion Davis

Ten-Gallon Hero

IN 1900 it seemed that the significance of the cowboy era would decline along with other brief but romantic episodes in American history. The Long Drive lingered only in the memories and imaginations of old cowhands. The "hoe-men" occupied former range land while Mennonites and professional dry farmers had sown their Turkey Red winter wheat on the Kansas prairies. To be sure, a cattle industry still flourished, but the cowboy was more like an employee of a corporation than the free-lance cowboy of old.[1] The myth of the cowboy lived on in the Beadle and Adams paper-back novels, with the followers of Ned Buntline and the prolific Colonel Prentiss Ingraham. But this seemed merely a substitution of the more up-to-date cowboy in a tradition which began with Leatherstocking and Daniel Boone.[2] If the mountain man had replaced Boone and the forest scouts, if the cowboy had succeeded the mountain man, and if the legends of Mike Fink and Crockett were slipping into the past, it would seem probable that the cowboy would follow, to become a quaint character of antiquity, overshadowed by newer heroes.

Yet more than a half-century after the passing of the actual wild and woolly cowboy, we find a unique phenomenon in American mythology. Gaudy-covered Western or cowboy magazines decorate stands, windows, and shelves in "drug" stores, bookstores, grocery stores and supermarkets from Miami to Seattle. Hundreds of cowboy movies and television shows are watched and lived through by millions of Americans. Nearly every little boy demands a cowboy suit and a Western six-shooter cap pistol. Cowboys gaze out at you with steely eye and cocked

[1]Edward Douglas Branch, *The Cowboy and His Interpreters* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1926), p. 69.
[2]Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp. v, vi.

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revolver from cereal packages and television screens. Jukeboxes in Bennington, Vermont, as well as Globe, Arizona, moan and warble the latest cowboy songs. Middle-age folk who had once thought of William S. Hart, Harry Carey, and Tom Mix as a passing phase, have lived to see several Hopalong Cassidy revivals, the Lone Ranger, Tim McCoy, Gene Autry, and Roy Rogers. Adolescents and even grown men in Maine and Florida can be seen affecting cowboy, or at least modified cowboy garb, while in the new airplane plants in Kansas, workers don their cowboy boots and wide-brimmed hats, go to work whistling a cowboy song, and are defiantly proud that they live in the land of lassos and sixguns.

When recognized at all, this remarkable cowboy complex is usually defined as the distortion of once-colorful legends by a commercial society.[3] The obvious divergence between the real West and the idealized version, the standardization of plot and characters, and the ridiculous incongruities of cowboys with automobiles and airplanes, all go to substantiate this conclusion.

However, there is more than the cowboy costume and stage setting in even the wildest of these adventures. Despite the incongruities, the cowboy myth exists in fact, and as such is probably a more influential social force than the actual cowboy ever was. It provides the framework for an expression of common ideals of morality and behavior. And while a commercial success, the hero cowboy must satisfy some basic want in American culture, or there could never be such a tremendous market. It is true that the market has been exploited by magazine, song, and scenario writers, but it is important to ask why similar myths have not been equally profitable, such as the lumbermen of the early northwest, the whale fishermen of New Bedford, the early railroad builders, or the fur traders. There have been romances written and movies produced idealizing these phases of American history, but little boys do not dress up like Paul Bunyan and you do not see harpooners on cereal packages. Yet America has had many episodes fully as colorful and of longer duration than the actual cowboy era.

The cowboy hero and his setting are a unique synthesis of two American traditions, and echoes of this past can be discerned in even the wildest of the modern horse operas. On the one hand, the line of descent is a direct evolution from the Western scout of Cooper and the Dime Novel; on the other, there has been a recasting of the golden myth of the ante-bellum South.[4] The two were fused sometime in the 1890's. Perhaps there was actually some basis for such a union. While the West was

[3]Smith, *Virgin Land*, p. 111.
[4]Emerson Hough, *The Story of the Cowboy* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1901), p. 200.

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economically tied to the North as soon as the early canals and railroads broke the river-centered traffic, social ties endured longer. Many Southerners emigrated West and went into the cattle business, and of course, the Long Drive originated in Texas.[5] The literary synthesis of two traditions only followed the two social movements. It was on the Great Plains that the descendants of Daniel Boone met the drawling Texas cowboy.

Henry Nash Smith has described two paradoxical aspects of the legendary Western scout, typified in Boone himself.[6] This woodsman, this buckskin-clad wilderness hunter is a pioneer, breaking trails for his countrymen to follow, reducing the savage wilderness for civilization. Nevertheless, he is also represented as escaping civilization, turning his back on the petty materialism of the world, on the hypocritical and self-conscious manners of community life, and seeking the unsullied, true values of nature.

These seemingly conflicting points of view have counterparts in the woodsman's descendant, the cowboy. The ideal cowboy fights for justice, risks his life to make the dismal little cowtown safe for law-abiding, respectable citizens, but in so doing he destroys the very environment which made him a heroic figure. This paradox is common with all ideals, and the cowboy legend is certainly the embodiment of a social ideal. Thus the minister or social reformer who rises to heroism in his fight against a sin-infested community, would logically become a mere figurehead once the community is reformed. There can be no true ideal or hero in a utopia. And the civilization for which the cowboy or trailblazer struggles is utopian in character.

But there is a further consideration in the case of the cowboy. In our mythology, the cowboy era is timeless. The ranch may own a modern station wagon, but the distinguishing attributes of cowboy and environment remain. There is, it is true, a nostalgic sense that this is the last great drama, a sad knowledge that the cowboy is passing and that civilization is approaching. But it never comes. This strange, wistful sense of the coming end of an epoch is not something outside our experience. It is a faithful reflection of the sense of approaching adulthood. The appeal of the cowboy, in this sense, is similar to the appeal of Boone, Leatherstocking, and the later Mountain Man. We know that adulthood, civilization, is inevitable, but we are living toward the end of childhood, and at that point "childness" seems eternal; it is a whole lifetime. But suddenly we find it is not eternal, the forests disappear, the mountains are settled, and we have new responsibilities. When we

[5]Edward E. Dale, *Cow Country* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), p. 15.
[6]Smith, *Virgin Land*, p. v.

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shut our eyes and try to remember, the last image of a carefree life appears. For the nation, this last image is the cowboy.

The reborn myth of the ante-bellum South also involves nostalgia; not so much nostalgia for something that actually existed as for dreams and ideals. When the Southern myth reappeared on the rolling prairies, it was purified and regenerated by the casting off of apologies for slavery. It could focus all energies on its former rôle of opposing the peculiar social and economic philosophy of the Northeast. This took the form of something more fundamental than mere agrarianism or primitivism. Asserting the importance of values beyond the utilitarian and material, this transplanted Southern philosophy challenged the doctrine of enlightened self-interest and the belief that leisure time is sin.

Like the barons and knights of Southern feudalism, the large ranch owners and itinerant cowboys knew how to have a good time. If there was a time for work, there was a time for play, and the early rodeos, horse races, and wild nights at a cowtown were not occasions for reserve. In this respect, the cowboy West was more in the tradition of fun-loving New Orleans than of the Northeast. Furthermore, the ranch was a remarkable duplication of the plantation, minus slaves. It was a hospitable social unit, where travelers were welcome even when the owner was absent. As opposed to the hard-working, thrifty, and sober ideal of the East, the actual cowboy was overly cheerful at times, generous to the point of waste, and inclined to value friendly comradeship above prestige.[7]

The mythical New England Yankee developed a code of action which always triumphed over the more sophisticated city slicker, because the Yankee's down-to-earth shrewdness, common sense, and reserved humor embodied values which Americans considered as pragmatically effective. The ideal cowboy also had a code of action, but it involved neither material nor social success. The cowboy avoided actions which "just weren't done" because he placed a value on doing things "right," on managing difficult problems and situations with ease, skill, and modesty. The cowboy's code was a Western and democratic version of the Southern gentleman's "honor."

In the early years of the twentieth century, a Philadelphia lawyer who affected a careless, loose-tied bow instead of the traditional black ribbon and who liked to appear in his shirt sleeves, wrote: "The nomadic bachelor west is over, the housed, married west is established."[8] In a book published in 1902 he had, more than any other man, established an idealized version of the former, unifying the Southern and Western

[7]Alfred Henry Lewis, *Wolfville Days* (New York: Stokes, 1902), p. 24.
[8]Branch, *The Cowboy and His Interpreters*, pp. 190 ff.

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hero myths in a formula which was not to be forgotten. Owen Wister had, in fact, liberated the cowboy hero from the Dime novels and provided a synthetic tradition suitable for a new century. *The Virginian* became a key document in popular American culture, a romance which defined the cowboy character and thus the ideal American character in terms of courage, sex, religion, and humor. The novel served as a model for hundreds of Western books and movies for half a century. In the recent popular movie, "High Noon," a Hollywood star who won his fame dramatizing Wister's novel, reënacted the same basic plot of hero rejecting heroine's pleas and threats, to uphold his honor against the villain Trampas. While this theme is probably at least a thousand years old, it was Owen Wister who gave it a specifically American content and thus explicated and popularized the modern cowboy ideal, with its traditions, informality, and all-important code.

Of course, Wister's West is not the realistic, boisterous, sometimes monotonous West of Charlie Siringo and Andy Adams. The cowboy, after all, drove cattle. He worked. There was much loneliness and monotony on the range, which has faded like mist under a desert sun in the reminiscences of old cow hands and the fiction of idealizers. The Virginian runs some errands now and then, but there are no cattle-driving scenes, no monotony, no hard work. Fictional cowboys are never bored. Real cowboys were often so bored that they memorized the labels on tin cans and then played games to see how well they could recite them.[9] The cowboys in books and movies are far too busy making love and chasing bandits to work at such a dreary task as driving cattle. But then the Southern plantation owner did no work. The befringed hero of the forests did not work. And if any ideal is to be accepted by adolescent America, monotonous work must be subordinated to more exciting pastimes. The fact that the cowboy hero has more important things to do is only in keeping with his tradition and audience. He is only a natural reaction against a civilization which demands increasingly monotonous work, against the approaching adulthood when playtime ends.

And if the cowboy romance banishes work and monotony, their very opposites are found in the immensity of the Western environment. To be sure, the deserts and prairies can be bleak, but they are never dull when used as setting for the cowboy myth. There is always an element of the unexpected, of surprise, of variety. The tremendous distances either seclude or elevate the particular and significant. There are mirages, hidden springs, dust storms, hidden identities, and secret ranches. In one of his early Western novels William MacLeod Raine used both

[9]Philip Ashton Rollins, *The Cowboy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), p. 185.

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devices of a secret ranch and hidden identity, while Hoffman Birney combined a hidden ranch, a secret trail, and two hidden identities.[10] In such an environment of uncertainty and change men of true genius stand out from the rest. The evil or good in an individual is quickly revealed in cowboy land. A man familiar with the actual cowboy wrote that "brains, moral and physical courage, strength of character, native gentlemanliness, proficiency in riding or shooting—every quality of leadership tended to raise its owner from the common level."[11]

The hazing which cowboys gave the tenderfoot was only preliminary. It was a symbol of the true test which anyone must undergo in the West. After the final winnowing of men, there emerge the heroes, the villains, and the clowns. The latter live in a purgatory and usually attach themselves to the hero group. Often, after the stress of an extreme emergency, they burst out of their caste and are accepted in the élite.

While the Western environment, according to the myth, sorts men into their true places, it does not determine men. It brings out the best in heroes and the worst in villains, but it does not add qualities to the man who has none. The cowboy is a superman and is adorable for his own sake. It is here that he is the descendant of supernatural folk heroes. Harry Hawkeye, the creator of an early cowboy hero, Calvin Yancey, described him as:

> . . . straight as an arrow, fair and ruddy as a Viking, with long, flowing golden hair, which rippled over his massive shoulders, falling nearly to his waist; a high, broad forehead beneath which sparkled a pair of violet blue eyes, tender and soulful in repose, but firm and determined under excitement. His entire face was a study for a sculptor with its delicate aquiline nose, straight in outline as though chiselled from Parian marble, and its generous manly mouth, with full crimson and arched lips, surmounted by a long, silken blonde mustache, through which a beautiful set of even white teeth gleamed like rows of lustrous pearls.[12]

While the Virginian is not quite the blond, Nordic hero, he is just as beautiful to behold. His black, curly locks, his lean, athletic figure, his quiet, unassuming manner, all go to make him the most physically attractive man Owen Wister could describe. Later cowboy heroes have shaved their mustaches, but the great majority have beautiful curly hair, usually blond or red, square jaws, cleft chins, broad shoulders, deep chests, and wasp-like waists. Like the Virginian, they are perfect

[10]William MacLeod Raine, *Bucky O'Connor* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1907); Hoffman Birney, *The Masked Rider* (Philadelphia: Penn, 1928).
[11]Rollins, *The Cowboy*, p. 352.
[12]Branch, *The Cowboy and His Interpreters*, p. 191.

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men, absolutely incapable of doing the wrong thing unless deceived.[13]

Many writers familiar with the real cowboy have criticized Wister for his concentration on the Virginian's love interest and, of course, they deplore the present degeneration of the cowboy plot, where love is supreme. There were few women in the West in the Chisholm Trail days and those few in Dodge City, Abilene, and Wichita were of dubious morality. The cowboy's sex life was intermittent, to say the least. He had to carry his thirst long distances, like a camel, and in the oases the orgies were hardly on a spiritual plane.[14] Since earlier heroes, like the woodsman, led celibate lives, it is important to ask why the cowboy depends on love interest.

At first glance, there would seem to be an inconsistency here. The cowboy is happiest with a group of buddies, playing poker, chasing horse thieves, riding in masculine company. He is contemptuous of farmers, has no interest in children, and considers men who have lived among women as effete. Usually he left his own family at a tender age and rebelled against the restrictions of mothers and older sisters. Neither the Virginian nor the actual cowboys were family men, nor did they have much interest in the homes they left behind. Thus it would seem that courting a young schoolteacher from Vermont would be self-destruction. At no place is the idealized cowboy further from reality than in his love for the tender woman from the East. Like the law and order he fights for, she will destroy his way of life.

But this paradox is solved when one considers the hero cowboy, not the plot, as the center of all attention. Molly Wood in *The Virginian*, like all her successors, is a literary device, a *dea ex machina* with a special purpose. Along with the Western environment, she serves to throw a stronger light on the hero, to make him stand out in relief, to complete the picture of an ideal. In the first place, she brings out qualities in him which we could not see otherwise. Without her, he would be too much the brute for a real folk hero, at least in a modern age. If Molly Wood were not in *The Virginian*, the hero might seem too raucous, too wild. Of course, his affair with a blonde in town is handled genteelly; his boyish pranks such as mixing up the babies at a party are treated as good, clean fun. But still, there is nothing to bring out his qualities of masculine tenderness, there is nothing to show his conscience until Molly Wood arrives. A cowboy's tenderness is usually revealed through his kindness to horses, and in this sense, the Eastern belle's rôle is that of a glorified horse. A woman in the Western drama is somebody to

[13]A Zane Grey hero is typical and is also seen through the eyes of a woman: "She saw a bronzed, strong-jawed, eagle-eyed man, stalwart, superb of height." Zane Grey, *The Light of Western Stars* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1914), pp. 29-30.

[14]Charles A. Siringo, *A Lone Star Cowboy* (Santa Fe: C. A. Siringo, 1919), p. 64.

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rescue, somebody to protect. In her presence, the cowboy shows that, in his own way, he is a cultural ideal. The nomadic, bachelor cowboys described by Andy Adams and Charles Siringo are a little too masculine, a little too isolated from civilization to become the ideal for a settled community.

While the Western heroine brings out a new aspect of the cowboy's character, she also serves the external purpose of registering our attitudes toward him. The cowboy ideal is an adorable figure and the heroine is the vehicle of adoration. Female characters enable the author to make observations about cowboys which would be impossible with an all-male cast.[15] This rôle would lose its value if the heroine surrendered to the cowboy immediately. So the more she struggles with herself, the more she conquers her Eastern reservations and surmounts difficulties before capitulating, the more it enhances the hero.

Again, *The Virginian* is the perfect example. We do not meet Molly Wood in the first part of the book. Instead, the author, the I, who is an Easterner, goes to Wyoming and meets the Virginian. It is love at first sight, not in the sexual sense, of course (this was 1902), but there is no mistaking it for anything other than love. This young man's love for the Virginian is not important in itself; it heightens our worship of the hero. The sex of the worshiper is irrelevant. At first the young man is disconsolate, because he cannot win the Virginian's friendship. He must go through the ordeal of not knowing the Virginian's opinion of him. But as he learns the ways of the West, the Virginian's sublime goodness is unveiled. Though increasing knowledge of the hero's character only serves to widen the impossible gulf between the finite Easterner and the infinite, pure virtue of the cowboy, the latter, out of his own free grace and goodness recognizes the lowly visitor, who adores him all the more for it. But this little episode is only a preface, a symbol of the drama to come. As soon as the Virginian bestows his grace on the male adorer, Molly Wood arrives. The same passion is reënacted, though on a much larger frame. In this rôle, the sex of Molly *is* important, and the traditional romance plot is only superficial form. Molly's coyness, her reserve, her involved heritage of Vermont tradition, all go to build an insurmountable barrier. Yet she loves the Virginian. And Owen Wister and his audience love the Virginian through Molly Wood's love. With the male adorer, they had gone about as far as they could go. But Molly offers a new height from which to love the Virginian. There are many exciting possibilities. Molly can save his life and nurse him back to health. She can threaten to break off their wedding if he goes out to

[15] No male character could observe that, " 'Cowboys play like they work or fight,' she added. 'They give their whole souls to it. They are great big simple boys.' " Grey, *The Light of Western Stars*, p. 187.

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fight his rival, and then forgive him when he disobeys her plea. The Virginian marries Molly in the end and most of his descendants either marry or are about to marry their lovely ladies. But this does not mean a physical marriage, children, and a home. That would be building up a hero only to destroy him. The love climax at the end of the cowboy drama raises the hero to a supreme height, the audience achieves an emotional union with its ideal. In the next book or movie the cowboy will be the carefree bachelor again.

The classic hero, Hopalong Cassidy, has saved hundreds of heroines, protected them, and has been adored by them. But in 1910 Hopalong, "remembering a former experience of his own, smiled in knowing cynicism when told that he again would fall under the feminine spell."[16] In 1950 he expressed the same resistance to actual marriage:

"But you can't always move on, Hoppy!" Lenny protested. "Someday you must settle down! Don't you ever think of marriage?" "Uh-huh, and whenever I think of it I saddle Topper and ride. I'm not a marrying man, Lenny. Sometimes I get to thinkin' about that poem a feller wrote, about how a woman is only a woman but—" "The open road is my Fate!" she finished. "That's it. But can you imagine any woman raised outside a tepee livin' in the same house with a restless man?"[17]

The cowboy hero is the hero of the pre-adolescent, either chronologically or mentally. It is the stage of revolt against femininity and feminine standards. It is also the age of hero worship. If the cowboy romance were sexual, if it implied settling down with a real *girl*, there would be little interest. One recent cowboy hero summarized this attitude in terms which should appeal strongly to any ten-year-old: "I'd as soon fight a she-lion barehanded as have any truck with a gal."[18] The usual cowboy movie idol has about as much social presence in front of the leading lady as a very bashful boy. He is most certainly not the lover-type. That makes him lovable to both male and female Americans. There can be no doubt that Owen Wister identified himself, not with the Virginian, but with Molly Wood.

While some glorifiers of the actual cowboy have maintained that his closeness to nature made him a deeply religious being, thus echoing the devoutness of the earlier woodsman hero who found God in nature, this tradition has never carried over to the heroic cowboy. Undoubtedly some of the real cowboys were religious, though the consensus of most

[16]Clarence E. Mulford, *Hopalong Cassidy* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Company, 1910), p. 11.
[17]Tex Burns, pseud. (Louis L'Amour), *Hopalong Cassidy and the Trail to Seven Pines* (New York: Doubleday, 1951), p. 187.
[18]Davis Dresser, *The Hangmen of Sleepy Valley* (New York: Jefferson House, 1950), p. 77.

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of the writers on the subject seems to indicate that indifference was more common.[19] Intellectualized religion obviously had no appeal and though the cowboy was often deeply sentimental, he did not seem prone to the emotional and frenzied religion of backwoods farmers and squatters. Perhaps his freedom from family conflicts, from smoldering hatreds and entangled jealousies and loves, had something to do with this. Despite the hard work, the violent physical conflicts, and the occasional debaucheries, the cowboy's life must have had a certain innocent, Homeric quality. Even when witnessing a lynching or murder, the cowboy must have felt further removed from total depravity or original sin than the farmer in a squalid frontier town, with his nagging wife and thirteen children.

At any rate, the cowboy hero of our mythology is too much of a god himself to feel humility. His very creation is a denial of any kind of sin. The cowboy is an enunciation of the goodness of man and the glory which he can achieve by himself. The Western environment strips off the artifice, the social veneer, and instead of a cringing sinner, we behold a dazzling superman. He is a figure of friendly justice, full of self-reliance, a very tower of strength. What need has he of a god?

Of course, the cowboy is not positively anti-religious. He is a respecter of traditions as long as they do not threaten his freedom. The Virginian is polite enough to the orthodox minister who visits his employer's ranch. He listens respectfully to the long sermon, but the ranting and raving about his evil nature are more than he can stand. He knows that his cowboy friends are good men. He loves the beauty of the natural world and feels that the Creator of such a world must be a good and just God. Beyond that, the most ignorant cowboy knows as much as this sinister-voiced preacher. So like a young Greek god leaving Mount Olympus for a practical joke in the interest of justice, the Virginian leaves his rôle of calm and straightforward dignity, and engages in some humorous guile and deceit. The minister is sleeping in the next room and the Virginian calls him and complains that the devil is clutching him. After numerous sessions of wrestling with his conscience, the sleepy minister acting as referee, morning comes before the divine finds he has been tricked. He leaves the ranch in a rage, much to the delight of all the cowboys. The moral, observes Wister, is that men who are obsessed with evil and morbid ideas of human nature, had better stay away from the cowboy West. As Alfred Henry Lewis put it, describing a Western town the year *The Virginian* was published, "Wolfville's a hard practical outfit, what you might call a heap obdurate, an' it's goin' to take more than them fitful an' o'casional sermons I aloodes to,—to

[19]Hough, *The Story of the Cowboy*, p. 199; Branch, *The Cowboy and His Interpreters*, p. 160; Rollins, *The Cowboy*, p. 84; Lewis, *Wolfville Days*, p. 216.

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reach the roots of its soul."[20] The cowboy is too good and has too much horse sense to be deluded by such brooding theology. Tex Burns could have been describing the Virginian when he wrote that his characters "had the cow hand's rough sense of humor and a zest for practical jokes no cow hand ever outgrows."[21]

Coming as it did at the end of the nineteenth century, the cowboy ideal registered both a protest against orthodox creeds and a faith that man needs no formal religion, once he finds a pure and natural environment. It is the extreme end of a long evolution of individualism. Even the individualistic forest scout was dependent on his surroundings, and he exhibited a sort of pantheistic piety when he beheld the wilderness. The mighty captain of industry, while not accountable to anyone in this world, gave lip-service to the generous God who had made him a steward of wealth. But the cowboy hero stood out on the lonely prairie, dependent on neither man nor God. He was willing to take whatever risks lay along his road and would gladly make fun of any man who took life too seriously. Speaking of his mother's death, a real cowboy is supposed to have said:

With almost her last breath, she begged me to make my peace with God, while the making was good. I have been too busy to heed her last advice. Being a just God, I feel that He will overlook my neglect. If not, I will have to take my medicine, with Satan holding the spoon.[22]

While the cowboy hero has a respect for property, he does not seek personal wealth and is generous to the point of carelessness. He gives money to his friends, to people in distress, and blows the rest when he hits town on Saturday night. He owns no land and, in fact, has only contempt for farmers, with their ploughed fields and weather-beaten buildings. He hates the slick professional gambler, the grasping Eastern speculator, and railroad man. How are these traits to be reconciled with his regard for property rights? The answer lies in a single possession—his horse. The cowboy's horse is what separates him from vagabondage and migratory labor. It is his link with the cavalier and plumed knight. More and more, in our increasingly property-conscious society, the cowboy's horse has gained in importance. A horse thief becomes a symbol of concentrated evil, a projection of all crime against property and concomitantly, against social status. Zane Grey was adhering to this tradition when he wrote, "in those days, a horse meant all the world to a man. A lucky strike of grassy upland and good water . . . made him

[20]Lewis, *Wolfville Days*, p. 216.
[21]Burns, *Hopalong Cassidy*, p. 130.
[22]Siringo, *A Lone Star Cowboy*, p. 37.

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rich in all that he cared to own." On the other hand, "a horse thief was meaner than a poisoned coyote."[23]

When a cowboy is willing to sell his horse, as one actually does in *The Virginian*, he has sold his dignity and self-identity. It is the tragic mistake which will inevitably bring its nemesis. His love for and close relationship with his horse not only make a cowboy seem more human, they also show his respect for propriety and order. He may drift from ranch to ranch, but his horse ties him down to respectability. Yet the cowboy hero is not an ambitious man. He lacks the concern for hard work and practical results which typifies the Horatio Alger ideal. Despite his fine horse and expensive saddle and boots, he values his code of honor and his friends more than possessions. Because the cowboy era is timeless, the hero has little drive or push toward a new and better life. He fights for law and order and this implies civilization, but the cowboy has no visions of empires, industrial or agrarian.

One of the American traits which foreign visitors most frequently described was the inability to have a good time. Americans constantly appear in European journals as ill-at-ease socially, as feeling they must work every spare moment. Certainly it was part of the American Protestant capitalistic ethic, the Poor Richard, Horatio Alger ideal, that spare time, frivolous play, and relaxation were sins which would bring only poverty, disease, and other misfortunes. If a youth would study the wise sayings of great men, if he worked hard and made valuable friends but no really confidential ones, if he never let his hair down or became too intimate with any person, wife included, if he stolidly kept his emotions to himself and watched for his chance in the world, then he would be sure to succeed. But the cowboy hero is mainly concerned with doing things skillfully and conforming to his moral code for its own sake. When he plays poker, treats the town to a drink, or raises a thousand dollars to buy off the evil mortgage, he is not aiming at personal success. Most cowboy heroes have at least one friend who knows them intimately, and they are seldom reserved, except in the presence of a villain or nosey stranger.

Both the hero and real cowboy appear to be easy-going and informal. In dress, speech, and social manner, the cowboy sets a new ideal. Every cowboy knows how to relax. If the villains are sometimes tense and nervous, the hero sits placidly at a card game, never ruffled, never disturbed, even when his arch rival is behind him at the bar, hot with rage and whisky. The ideal cowboy is the kind of man who turns around slowly when a pistol goes off and drawls, "Ah'd put thet up, if Ah were yew." William MacLeod Raine's Sheriff Collins chats humorously with

[23]Zane Grey, *Wildfire* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1917), pp. 10, 7.

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some train robbers and maintains a calm, unconcerned air which amuses the passengers, though he is actually pumping the bandits for useful information.[24] Previously, he had displayed typical cowboy individualism by flagging the train down and climbing aboard, despite the protests of the conductor. Instead of the eager, aspiring youth, the cowboy hero is like a young tomcat, calm and relaxed, but always ready to spring into action. An early description of one of the most persistent of the cowboy heroes summarizes the ideal characteristics which appeal to a wide audience:

Hopalong Cassidy had the most striking personality of all the men in his outfit; humorous, courageous to the point of foolishness, eager for fight or frolic, nonchalant when one would expect him to be quite otherwise, curious, loyal to a fault, and the best man with a Colt in the Southwest, he was a paradox, and a puzzle even to his most intimate friends. With him life was a humorous recurrence of sensations, a huge pleasant joke instinctively tolerated, but not worth the price cowards pay to keep it. He had come onto the range when a boy and since that time he had laughingly carried his life in his open hand, and . . . still carried it there, and just as recklessly.[25]

Of course, most cowboy books and movies bristle with violence. Wild fist fights, brawls with chairs and bottles, gun play and mass battles with crashing windows, fires, and the final racing skirmish on horseback, are all as much a part of the cowboy drama as the boots and spurs. These bloody escapades are necessary and are simply explained. They provide the stage for the hero to show his heroism, and since the cowboy is the hero of the pre-adolescent, he must prove himself by their standards. Physical prowess is the most important thing for the ten- or twelve-year-old mind. They are constantly plagued by fear, doubt, and insecurity, in short, by evil, and they lack the power to crush it. The cowboy provides the instrument for their aggressive impulses, while the villain symbolizes all evil. The ethics of the cowboy band are the ethics of the boy's gang, where each member has a rôle determined by his physical skills and his past performance. As with any group of boys, an individual cowboy who had been "taken down a peg," was forever ridiculed and teased about his loss in status.[26]

The volume of cowboy magazines, radio programs and motion pictures, would indicate a national hero for at least a certain age group, a national hero who could hardly help but reflect specific attitudes. The cowboy myth has been chosen by this audience because it combines a complex of traits, a way of life, which they consider the proper ideal

[24] Raine, *Bucky O'Connor*, p. 22.
[25] Mulford, *Hopalong Cassidy*, p. 65.
[26] Sam P. Ridings, *The Chisholm Trail* (Medford, Okla.: S. P. Ridings, 1936), p. 297.

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for America. The actual drama and setting are subordinate to the grand figure of the cowboy hero, and the love affairs, the exciting plots, and the climactic physical struggles, present opportunities for the definition of the cowboy code and character. Through the superficial action, the heroism of the cowboy is revealed, and each repetition of the drama, like the repetition of a sacrament, reaffirms the cowboy public's faith in their ideal.

Perhaps the outstanding cowboy trait, above even honor, courage, and generosity, is the relaxed, calm attitude toward life. Though he lives intensely, he has a calm, self-assurance, a knowledge that he can handle anything. He is good-humored and jovial.[27] He never takes women too seriously. He can take a joke or laugh at himself. Yet the cowboy is usually anti-intellectual and anti-school, another attitude which appeals to a younger audience.[28]

Above all, the cowboy is a "good joe." He personifies a code of personal dignity, personal liberty, and personal honesty. Most writers on the actual cowboy represented him as having these traits.[29] While many of these men obviously glorify him as much as any fiction writers, there must have been some basis for their judgment. As far as his light-hearted, calm attitude is concerned, it is amazing how similar cowboys appear, both in romances and non-fiction.[30] Millions of American youth subscribed to the new ideal and yearned for the clear, Western atmosphere of "unswerving loyalty, the true, deep affection, and good-natured banter that left no sting."[31] For a few thrilling hours they could roughly toss conventions aside and share the fellowship of ranch life and adore the kind of hero who was never bored and never afraid.

Whether these traits of self-confidence, a relaxed attitude toward life, and good humor, have actually increased in the United States during the past fifty years, is like asking whether men love their wives more now than in 1900. Certainly the effective influence of the cowboy myth can never be determined. It is significant, however, that the cowboy ideal has emerged above all others. And while the standardization of plot and character seems to follow other commercial conventions, the very popularity of this standard cowboy is important and is an over-

[27]The cowboy hero was judged to be "out of sorts when he could not vent his peculiar humor on somebody or something." Grey, *The Light of Western Stars*, pp. 118-19.

[28]This anti-intellectualism in the Western myth is at least as old as Cooper's parody of the scientist, Obed Bat, in *The Prairie*. More recently, Will James took pride in his son's poor attitude and performance in school. Will James, *The American Cowboy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), p. 107.

[29]Ridings, *The Chisholm Trail*, pp. 278-94; Rollins, *The Cowboy*, p. 67; Dale, *Cow Country*, pp. 122, 153.

[30]According to Alfred Henry Lewis, surly and contentious people were just as unpopular in Wolfville as they appear to be in fiction. Lewis, *Wolfville Days*, p. 217.

[31]Mulford, *Hopalong Cassidy*, p. 155.

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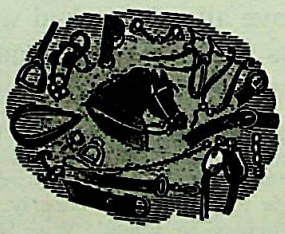
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looked aspect of the American character. It is true that this hero is infantile, that he is silly, overdone, and unreal. But when we think of many past ideals and heroes, myths and ethics; when we compare our placid cowboy with, say, the eager, cold, serious hero of Nazi Germany (the high-cheekboned, blond lad who appeared on the Reichsmarks); or if we compare the cowboy with the gangster heroes of the thirties, or with the serious, self-righteous and brutal series of Supermen, Batmen, and Human Torches; when, in an age of violence and questioned public and private morality, if we think of the many possible heroes we might have had—then we can be thankful for our silly cowboy. We could have chosen worse.

Afternote

Since this essay was originally printed, a growing literature has appeared on the American cult of the cowboy. A full-length study is Joe Bertram Frantz and Julian E. Choate, Jr., *The American Cowboy: The Myth and the Reality* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1955). For a psychological orientation, see Kenneth J. Munden, "A Contribution to the Psychological Understanding of the Origin of the Cowboy and his Myth," *American Imago*, XV (Summer, 1958), 103–48. For the importance of Negro cowboys, see the articles by Philip Durham and Everett L. Jones, "Slaves on Horseback," *Pacific Historical Review*, XXXIII (Nov., 1964), 405–09, and "Negro Cowboys," *American West*, I (1964), 26–31, and Durham's "The Negro Cowboy," *American Quarterly*, VI (Summer, 1954), 291–301, which follows immediately.

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Philip Durham

The Negro Cowboy

WHO knows, today, about the Negro cowboy and his contribution to the making of the West?[1] Ask anyone. Or read some of the thousands of "Western Stories" which have appeared during the last fifty years; if the Negro cowboy is in one, he is very well hidden. Apparently, then, the existence of the Negro cowboy is currently unknown because the writers of Western stories did not include him: his non-existence is due to the vagaries of fiction. One important reason for his exclusion may have been discovered by Professor Walter P. Webb, who asked several Western story magazine editors to give their reasons for the popularity of the type, and here is an answer:

> The Western story is the most popular type of action story. In order to give reasons for this, one thing must be recognized immediately: it is understood by us, and should be understood by everyone, that we are dealing with the popularity of Western stories as concerns readers who are white, who may be called Nordics, using this term advisedly. The white race has always been noted for being hard-drinking, hard-fighting, fearless, fair and square.[2]

Quite obviously, the Negro cowboy, in fiction, was confronted with a color line over which he could not ride.

The American cowboy has been described, by men who actually knew him, in these terms: he was independent, loyal, impulsive, generous; he had a hot and hasty temper, a strong sense of right and wrong; and he took his liquor straight. This description is not, however, peculiar to the Anglo-Saxon cowboy; it applies equally to the Negro cowboy, who, after the Civil War, moved out across the plains to play a significant rôle in the development of the cattle industry and became a part of the

[1]A paper from this article was read before the American Studies Association Group at the Modern Language Association meeting in Chicago on December 28, 1953.

[2]Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (New York: Ginn and Company, 1931), p. 467.

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spirit of the West—a spirit which demanded a conscience but cared little for color.

Western autobiography, which unfortunately has a limited audience, includes the Negro cowboy, and in sufficient numbers to establish his active presence and contributions. Of the three non-fiction books published during the nineteenth century which dealt with the cowboy, two of them included the Negro. The first, Joseph McCoy's *Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest*, published in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1874, describes the cowboys generally, as a type, and does not differentiate among them. The second, however, an autobiographical account, *A Texas Cowboy*, by Charles A. Siringo, refers to the Negro cowboy. This story of range life is accurate, and one senses the authenticity, the realistic approach, without literary affectation. In recording his day-to-day activities, Siringo makes no attempt to set apart the Negro cowboy; rather he is mentioned casually as is everyone else. He writes, for example, "At another time, on the same day, I roped a large animal and got my horse jerked over backwards on top of me and in the horse getting up he got me all wound up in the rope, so that I couldn't free myself until relieved by 'Jack,' a negro man who was near at hand."[3] Or, on another occasion, "Henry Coats was in the lead of the herd. Asa Dawdy and Otto Draub on the left point, while Negro 'Gabe' and I kept them from turning to the right."[4]

The third non-fiction cowboy book of the nineteenth century was *The Story of the Cowboy* by Emerson Hough. This book describes a symbolic cowboy which would include them all:

> Rude and unlettered though he be, and treating his companions with a rough and ready familiarity, the cowpuncher yet accords to his neighbour the right to live the life and go the gait which seems most pleasing to himself. One does not intrude upon the rights of others in the cow country, and he looks to it very promptly that no one shall intrude upon his. In the cow towns or at the cow camps one never hears the abusiveness or rude speech common in the older settlements.[5]

With this attitude Hough did not need to identify the Negro cowboy more than to say, when speaking of breaking horses, "Some of the early Southern busters were negroes, and very good breakers they made."[6]

Although there is, in twentieth-century publications, ample evidence of the Negro cowboy in the biographical, autobiographical, and historical accounts of the West, there has been no attempt on my part, of

[3]Charles A. Siringo, *A Texas Cowboy* (New York: New American Library, 1951), p. 43.
[4]Siringo, *A Texas Cowboy*, p. 64.
[5]Emerson Hough, *The Story of the Cowboy* (New York and London: D. Appletor and Company, 1927), p. 203.
[6]Hough, p. 91.

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course, to search these books merely to find his presence. But a few examples are necessary to indicate the manner in which the Negro was treated or referred to in these accounts. Also, it is not only possible but, of course, probable that the Negro was often included in a group of cowboys without being specifically identified. There was no particular reason why he should have been. In *The Cowboy*, Philip Rollins comments on the nationality of the cowboy.

> While the men of the Range were mainly English or Irish descent or birth, and had, in frequent instances, claim to early American ancestors of Scottish origin, the Southwest added to its quota of such bloods numerous men of Mexican extraction, and a more than occasional negro, with here and there men of strain partly Indian. The majority of all the men were American born.[7]

Although Rollins lists national and color types, his interest is in what makes up an American cowboy.

Charles Siringo's twentieth-century autobiography, *Riata and Spurs*, is a re-write of his earlier work with more literary pretensions. Yet he continues to write casually of the Negro cowboy and reports incidents not recorded in the first book. In referring to a time when he was riding herd with Negro cowboys, he tells how he was being dragged by a horse and Lige saved his life.[8] Again he wrote, "I hunted up Babe Fisher, a yellow negro whom I knew could be trusted, and who afterward became a noted outlaw. . . ."[9] One of the episodes concerns a Negro cowboy in the rôle of a peace officer, losing his life in an attempt to bring in the notorious outlaw, John Wesley Harden.[10]

The Negro cowboy serving as a peace officer was not unusual. Frank Eaton, more colorfully known on the range as Pistol Pete, includes in his autobiography an incident in which a Negro marshal was successful.

> We were just leaving the livery barn when I saw Charlie Pettit walking up to me. Charlie was a big Negro Deputy United States Marshal, from the Wichita Court.
>
> "Frank," he said, "Ernest Lewis is up at the hotel and I have a warrant for him. He may have a gang up there. Come up and help me get him."
>
> We started up to the hotel together. Lewis was sitting on the porch. He started like he was going to make a gunplay, but I put my hand on my gun and shook my head at him and he stopped. He and I had played with guns and he knew I was the best shot.
>
> "Sorry, Mr. Lewis," Pettit said, "but I have a warrant for you and it's a fugitive warrant."

[7]Philip Ashton Rollins, *The Cowboy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), p. 22.
[8]Charles A. Siringo, *Riata and Spurs* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1931), p. 18.
[9]Siringo, *Riata and Spurs*, p. 6.
[10]Siringo, *Riata and Spurs*, p. 145.

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By that he meant that Lewis was paid for if anything went wrong. He had committed a crime that was punishable by death. Pettit's orders were to bring him in dead or alive.[11]

Eaton was, of course, glorifying himself, but it was the Negro ex-cowboy who completed the assignment of taking in a white outlaw.

A book in which the Negro cowboy figures quite prominently is J. Frank Dobie's *A Vaquero of the Brush Country, Partly from the Reminiscences of John Young*. At the outset the word "cowboy" is defined, and the author seeks out its derivation. In Southwest Texas the cowboys were generally referred to as "vaqueros," a term originally applied only to Spanish or Mexican cowboys. "But from an early day," writes the author, "Texans, especially those near the border have used the word without reference to race." Thus in one outfit would be found Mexican, Negro, and white "vaqueros."[12] The Negroes in this book range from comic to heroic. When a Negro cowpuncher went on guard he was told to call the next watch by the stars. Not being able to read the stars properly, he did not know when to call his successor, so he rode herd all night.[13]

Living up to the requirements of the Western Code was naturally expected of the Negro cowboy, and this story illustrates that he did not shirk his duty.

Not alone was it his breed that made the American cowboy stick to herd and horse until only death could drag him loose; it was his occupation.

"We had a negro cowboy named George," says an old time Plains cowman, "who was not very well clad because he liked to pike at monte too well to buy clothes. We all had colds and coughs till it was like a bunch of Texas pot hounds baying a 'possum' when we tried to sleep. One bitter night I was near George on herd and tried to get him to go to the chuck wagon and turn his horse loose, but he was too game for that. His teeth were chattering as he said to me 'I can stand it if the rest of you all can.' Presently I saw him lean over his saddle horn, coughing, and he looked like he was losing his breath. By the time I got to him he was off his horse, as dead as a mackerel and stiff as a poker. He had simply frozen to death sitting on that horse. We placed his body in the chuck wagon on his bed and drove to the Palo Duro and on the highest hill we could find we planted the poor black boy, rolled in his blankets. The ground was sandy; so we could dig a grave deep enough that the coyotes would not claw into it."[14]

Perhaps it is not unusual that an old time cowboy should recall, for the

[11]Frank Eaton, *Pistol Pete* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1952), p. 267.
[12]J. Frank Dobie, *A Vaquero of the Brush Country, Partly from the Reminiscences of John Young* (Dallas: The Southwestern Press, 1929), p. 1.
[13]*Ibid.*, p. 97.
[14]*Ibid.*, p. 100.

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purpose of illustrating the loyalty of the cowboy, an example which just happened to be a Negro.

The inevitable cook must always figure in cowboy yarns. However, for the moment, we are interested in the real kind, not the storybook kind. The cooks were either white or colored, it did not matter which, and they were ex-cowboys. When a cowboy was no longer able to do his share in riding herd, for "physical injury, ordinarily the gift of bucking, and in the form of hernia, allowed to the average man but seven years of active riding,"[15] he often preferred to become a cook rather than to leave the range. He was occasionally unhappy because his life became less active, but his position as a cook was not necessarily a degraded one, nor was he helpless. One of the tales in *The Trail Drivers of Texas* is the story of a shooting match between a white cowboy and the Negro cook—a two-year-old heifer against five dollars. The cook was hard to beat and the cowboy won only on a fluke.[16] Reminiscing with John Young provides another sketch:

The one man in our outfit that I recall most often and most vividly was Sam, the negro cook. He always had a cheerful word or cheerful song, and he seemed to have an affection for every one of us. When we camped in the vicinity of brush every cowboy before coming in would rope a chunk of wood and snake it up to the chuck wagon. That wood always made Sam grinning happy whether he needed it or not. He was about thirty-five years old, as black as a crow, and weighed around 225 pounds. As he had been raised on a ranch, he was a good rider, and frequently one of the boys would get him to "top off" (ride first) a bad horse.[17]

In those days Sam could hold his own among the men of the West.

It would be unforgivable to discuss the cattle range and the cowboy without including at least one stampede. The following, from the "Recollections" of Charles Goodnight—one of the most famous of the rangemen of the Southwest—, has a Negro cowboy and also a touch of frontier humor. Charlie Goodnight and his cowboys were driving a herd through the Pecos country of New Mexico in 1867, where they had been constantly harassed by Indians who stampeded the cattle, shot one of the cowboys, and stole part of the herd. A severe lightning storm added to the difficulties of driving. The herd was in an extremely nervous condition as Goodnight rode along one side of it with "Bose Ikard, an ex-slave and one of the best night riders he ever had."[18]

[15] Rollins, *The Cowboy*, p. 305.
[16] J. Marvin Hunter, ed., *The Trail Drivers of Texas* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1925), pp. 484-88.
[17] Dobie, *A Vaquero of the Brush Country, Partly from the Reminiscences of John Young*, p. 137.
[18] J. Evetts Haley, *Charles Goodnight Cowman and Plainsman* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1936), p. 166.

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"The cattle had been so shot to pieces," said Goodnight, "and so badly spoiled that they continued stampeding, and after we had passed through Buffalo Gap we had a run which I shall never forget. They had been quiet all night, and at daybreak I told Bose, who was on guard with me, to watch them and I would wake the cook. I reached camp and tied my horse to the wagon wheel, giving him some rope so he could get a little grass. Then I commenced to wake the men who were asleep around the wagon on the side next the herd. Something happened, in an instant the herd stampeded right down on the camp, and it looked as though the men would be trampled to death. There certainly was some scrambling, as most of them had not got out of bed.

"I jerked a blanket off one of the beds, jumped in front of the cattle that were coming at full speed, and by waving the blanket and doing all the yelling I could, succeeded in splitting the herd around the wagon and beds. Charlie, powerful, fast, and the best-trained horse I ever rode in a stampede, was still tied to the wagon. He knew his business, of course, wanted to go, and got to the end of his rope, where the stampede knocked him down and many cattle went over him. I had my belt knife ready, and as the last steer cleared him, I cut the rope and he got up with me on him. I supposed he would be scared out of his wits and run from the cattle, but at once he struck out at full speed with the herd.

"By this time it was light enough to see. I kept going up the side of the cattle as fast as possible, wondering why Bose had not turned the front. When I had almost caught up with him, he looked back and saw me, and immediately his horse shot out like lightning and he threw the leaders around. After we got them circled I asked him why he had not turned them sooner.

" 'I'll tell you sah,' answered the cautious Bose. 'I wuzn't sartin who had dis herd 'till I saw you. I t'ought mabe de Indians had 'um.' "[19]

A Negro cowboy who commanded great respect both as a man and cowpuncher is in "Jack" Thorp's book of the old range days. "Cowmen from Toyah, Texas, to Las Vegas, New Mexico, knew Add, and most of them at different times had worked on round-ups with him." The L F D outfit's range boss, Add, was well liked and was "one of the best hands on the Pecos River."[20] Among other accomplishments, "Nig Add" was a "dictionary on earmarks an' brands,"[21] which "in due time [caused him to become the] hero of a cowboy song. . . ."[22] On one occasion, however, Add's popularity created a good deal of embarrassment. "Everybody knew him. When he got married each cow-man wanted to give him a present, no one knowing what the other man had sent him, 'as ranches were far apart.' He received nineteen stoves and ranges for wedding presents."[23]

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 166-67.
[20] N. Howard Thorp, *Pardner of the Wind* (Caldwell: The Caxton Printers, 1945), p. 22.
[21] N. Howard Thorp, *Songs of the Cowboys* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), p. 166.
[22] Thorp, *Pardner of the Wind*, p. 22.
[23] Thorp, *Songs of the Cowboys*, p. 166. See also John A. Lomax, *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 46. Mr. Lomax writes that

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Perhaps the most interesting of all books dealing with the Negro cowboy is an autobiography written by one. It is the story of Deadwood Dick of Deadwood, South Dakota fame, a name well known in Western lore; the full title reads *The Life and Adventures of Nat Love Better Known in the Cattle Country as "Deadwood Dick"—By Himself.* Born in 1854, sometime in June he thought, in Davidson County, Tennessee, Nat was the son of slave parents who had positions of responsibility on a plantation. From Nat Love one must expect some exaggeration, as one must expect it from every cowboy who wrote his autobiography, especially after he had left the range and had time to dream through his experiences, but in his "Preface" Love writes, "I have tried to record events simply as they are, without attempting to fill out a chapter at the cost of the truth."[24] As a boy he had had plenty of riding experience on the plantation, so with his freedom and a growth of fifteen years he decided to increase his opportunities by going West. Arriving in a Kansas cattle town, in 1869, Nat sought work from Duval, a Texas outfit which had just brought in a herd and was preparing to return to the home ranch. "There were several colored cowboys among them," according to Nat, "and good ones too." Before he could be hired he had to prove his ability, so the boss of the outfit had a colored cowboy named Bronko Jim get Nat the roughest horse they had, which he rode and earned the name "Red River Dick."[25]

With his first range outfit Nat Love began a successful and venturesome career. "By strict attention to business, born of a genuine love of the free and wild life of the range, and absolute fearlessness, I became known throughout the country as a good all around cowboy and a splendid hand in a stampede." After three years with Duval, Nat signed on with the Pete Gallinger Company, "whose immense range was located on the Gila River in southern Arizona." There he stayed "for several years and soon became one of their most trusted men, taking an important part in all the big round-ups and cuttings throughout western Texas, Arizona and other states where the company had interests to be looked after."[26] And the Gallinger Company eventually made Nat their chief brand reader.

Love took part in all of the cowboys' activities, and his manner in relating these events is no different from that found in any other cowboy autobiography. He knew, for example, that the "test of a cowboy's

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on the big ranches he had trouble getting the cowboys to sing for him, but with "smaller groups on remote ranches I enjoyed better fortune. Two or three Negro cowboys sang lustily when I got them away from the crowd."

[24]Nat Love, *The Life and Adventures of Nat Love* (Los Angeles: Wayside Press, 1907), preface.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 41.

[26]*Ibid.*, p. 43.

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worth is in his gameness and his nerve."[27] One of the favorite sports was roping and riding steers, which, thought Nat, "is done more for the sport's sake than anything else, and the love of showing off, a weakness of all cowboys more or less."[28] It was not uncommon for them to become involved in shooting trouble over brands, and death was frequently the result. On Christmas Day, 1872,

I and a number of friends were in a place called Holbrook, Ariz. A dispute started over a saddle horse with the following result. Arizona Bob drew his forty-five Colt revolver, but before he had time to fire he was instantly killed by A. Jack. Then a general fight ensued in which five horses and three men were killed.[29]

After delivering a herd, at the end of a trail, Nat was always ready to "see the elephant" with the rest of the boys.

Then we all headed for Dodge City to have a good time, and I assure you we had it. It was our intention and ambition to paint the town a deep red color and drink up all the bad whiskey in the city. Our nearly two months journey over the dusty plains and ranges had made us all inordinately thirsty and wild, and here is where we had our turn, accordingly we started out to do the town in true western style, in which we were perfectly successful until the town had done us, and we were dead broke. . . . While our money lasted we would certainly enjoy ourselves, in dancing, drinking and shooting up the town.[30]

Every old cowhand who has written about his days on the range has included at least one episode of this sort.

During a trip to old Mexico to pick up a herd, Love's outfit had an opportunity to meet Mexican cowboys. "These men were for the most part typical greasers, but they proved to us that they knew a thing or two about the cattle business, and all the things considered they were a jolly companionable sort of an outfit."[31] Along with the other cowboys of the time, Nat went through the usual adventures which appear to have happened to them all. Once, after he had put up a terrific fight, he was captured by Yellow Dog's tribe. They would normally have killed him, he thought, but they did not because there was colored blood in the tribe; "and as I was a colored man they wanted to keep me, as they thought I was too good a man to die."[32] With pride in his ability to more than hold his own among the cowboys, Nat swaggered a bit when he admitted to being "naturally tough," for he "carried the marks of

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 50.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 49.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 51.
[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 31.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

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fourteen bullet wounds." He confessed, also, that he had been a "dare devil" cowboy, "wild, reckless, free" and "afraid of nothing," but he did not want to leave an impression that he was a heartless killer.

It was not with any sense of pride or in bravado that I recount here the fate of the men who have fallen at my hand.

It is a terrible thing to kill a man no matter what the cause. But as I am writing a true history of my life, I cannot leave these facts out. But every man who died at my hands was either seeking my life or died in open warfare, when it was a case of killing or being killed.[33]

Like other cowboys writing "true life" stories, Nat also happened to meet the famous men of the plains, including Buffalo Bill, Billy the Kid, and Bat Masterson, the renowned marshal of Dodge City.

The high point, however, in the career of Nat Love came on July 4, 1876, in Deadwood, South Dakota. In the spring of that year the home ranch had received an order to drive three thousand head to a point near Deadwood. After the cattle had been delivered, the boys headed for town to celebrate. On the morning of the Fourth the gamblers and mining men of Deadwood collected a purse of $200 as first prize for a roping contest. There were about twelve contestants, "six of them being colored cowboys." Not only did Nat win, but he set a record. The morning event had been so successful that another purse was made up for a shooting contest in the afternoon. Again Nat won, but with the purse came the biggest prize of all: he was given the title of "Deadwood Dick," a distinction and honor which he was still proudly carrying when he wrote his book thirty years later. Love found freedom and happiness as a cowboy on the Western range, for he came into his own at a time and place where to be "all man" was the most important requisite of the West. As Nat expressed it, "What man with the fire of life and youth and health in his veins could not rejoice in such a life?"[34] Color was no barrier to fame for Nat Love.

At this point these autobiographical data raise a historical question in Western literature: why did the fame achieved by the Negro cowboy not carry over into fiction? That the Negro cowboys were on the range in considerable numbers, and doing a creditable job, is, as has been pointed out, a historical fact. However, the day of the range cowboy was over before his fiction began. There is a difference of opinion as to which is the first Western story, but all students of the genre agree that it came between 1902 and Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* in 1912.[35]

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 105.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[35] Some candidates for the first Western story are Owen Wister, *The Virginian* (1902); Bertha M. Bower, *Chip of the Flying U* (1904); and Zane Grey, *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912).

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And the comparatively short period of the range cowboy, approximately thirty-five years, had ended by 1900. We have no cowboy statistics, but the evidence indicates that the greatest percentage of Negro cowboys were on the Western plains, particularly in Texas, immediately after the Civil War, and that their number was dwindling rapidly by the end of the century. The Texas Rangers had been dissolved during the war, and in 1870 the governor of Texas set up the state police. Many Negroes were state police officers in a body which soon became so hated that it was considered a duty to shoot them on sight, for they were set up to enforce Reconstruction measures. The state police lasted for only three years, with the Rangers being reëstablished in 1874—excluding the Negro. The Negro began moving farther west, into New Mexico and Arizona, and on up into the northern range. Nat Love left Texas for Arizona in 1872. Gradually, as the century moved on, and the West became more populated, the Negro cowboy was forced into other occupations. In 1890 Deadwood Dick became a pullman porter.

It is possible that the earliest writers of Western stories, during the first decade of this century, attributed the then existing conditions to an earlier period. These writers knew the West only after it had become populated, and they knew but little of those days when a cowboy was paid and valued for skill, not color.

It is quite obvious that the Romantic tradition in fiction laid its heavy hand on the Western story. In Southern fiction the Negro was cast as a "faithful retainer." In the Western story the same attitude prevailed, for the Negro could be a cook but he could not be a cowboy. The earliest Westerns unrealistically included women; the capable but pure, white kind, gracefully riding across the plains, into the sunset and the purple sage, admired from afar by all the cowboys, and won at the end by the hard riding, hard shooting heroes. In the words of a tall puncher called Jess Hill:

Punchin' cows in these mountains ain't like it is in a book I read before I left the ranch, where all the cute waddie had ter do was ride slick fat horses, sleep on a geese-hair bed, set the boss' daughter en afterwards marry her, en she the prettiest girl in the West. I wonder why some sure-enough cowhand don't write the truth about it, heh?[36]

The fact that truth is stranger than fiction is one of the reasons why the Western romance prevailed in its present form. Fiction was what the East has been brought up on, a romantic concept of the West, and the Western writers saw no reason to write fact when fiction paid. The Negro cowboy did not fit into the romantic concept, and once the Western

[36]Thorp, *Pardner of the Wind*, p. 13.

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story stereotype was formed, during its first decade, it became impervious to change.

It is possible, however, that because so many of the Westerns were written by people who did not know the West, that these writers were unaware of the contribution of the Negro cowboy to the opening up of the range. When Owen Wister, Bertha Bower, and Zane Grey arrived in the West they saw only the saffron after-glow; had they been in time to witness the West's high noon, the Western story might never have come into existence. Fiction writers could see only a particular kind of man silhouetted against the skyline, and they chose to ignore the fact that "chaps" were worn by men of many nationalities and colors and that these were also included with the "men who made the spirit of the West, who forbade Mason and Dixon's line to extend, who harnessed democracy."[37] But now we know that pioneering, according to tradition, is an Anglo-Saxon job, and the Western myth is sometimes stronger and more important than reality.

In all fairness to those serious novelists of the West who write realistically, it should be said that when their setting and time includes him they can accord the Negro proper treatment. This is in the novel of the West—not the Western story—, and two of this type who come to mind are Walter Van Tilburg Clark and Tom Lea.[38] But where is the Negro cowboy in the Western story, in these thousands of books in this multi-million dollar business? The Negro was part of the spirit of the West, but he is not included in its fiction. The early West had a tradition which asked of a man only that he be capable and have courage and loyalty: where he came from and what he looked like was immaterial. That same West is represented in fiction by an Anglo-Saxon tradition which implies that all readers are white and that only a white cowboy can be a hero who is "fearless, fair and square."

Afternote

"The Negro Cowboy" is a preliminary investigation into the reasons why history and fiction ignored the thousands of Negro cowboys who rode the trails from Texas. With Everett L. Jones I published a greatly expanded treatment of this subject in *The Negro Cowboys* (New York, Dodd, Mead, 1965).

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[37]Rollins, *The Cowboy*, p. 383.
[38]Walter Van Tilburg Clark, *The Ox-Bow Incident* (New York: Random House, 1940). Tom Lea, *The Wonderful Country* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1952).

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Mody C. Boatright

The American Rodeo

IN 1880 HE WOULD HAVE BEEN A HARDY SOUL INDEED WHO PREDICTED THAT in the first half of the next century the cowboy would become the leading American folk hero. For at that time he was known, if known at all outside the region he frequented, at best as a provincial rustic and at worst as a ruffian and a thief and a murderer. How he attained his present status is a complicated story, only a single chapter of which will be attempted here.

One of the most effective means by which the cowboy established a favorable image of himself was by the public exhibitions of his occupational skills, skills hitherto unknown to Europeans and Eastern Americans. The range cattle industry, out of which these skills developed, had been established in the southern tip of Texas by Mexican rancheros, from whom the Anglo Texans borrowed the equipment and techniques for handling wild longhorn cattle by men on horseback. Basic to this equipment was the rope (*lasso, lariat, reata*), and a strong saddle with a horn to serve as a snubbing post. A highly skilled roper, who could catch an animal by the horns, neck, forefeet, hindfeet or any single foot named, was much admired. Admired too was his horse, which knew exactly what to do when he found a steer or a bull on the other end of the rope.

These horses had not been brought up as pets. Whether they were captured mustangs or horses raised on the ranch, they had been allowed to run on the range until mature. When first ridden they invariably tried to unseat their riders by a series of violent movements called pitching (bucking in the Northwest). Since pitching was peculiar to the range horse of the Americas, the contest between horse and rider had a novel fascination for those unaccustomed to range life. It has an equal (though not novel) fascination for the range men themselves, for whenever broncs were to be ridden cowboys and vaqueros gathered to see the show and to shout derision or encouragement.

It was inevitable that sooner or later shows would be staged both to determine championships and to delight the crowd. One such contest was witnessed by Mayne Reid in Santa Fe in June 1847. To a friend in Ireland he wrote:

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> This round-up is a great time for the cow hands, a Donnybrook fair it is indeed. They contest with each other for the best roping and throwing, and there are horse races and whisky and wines.[1]

In a bronc riding contest held in Deer Trail, Colorado, on July 4, 1869, a cowboy named Gardenshire, lately from England, by riding a famous outlaw horse known as Montana Blizzard, won first prize and the praise of a newspaper reporter, who described the performance in some detail and called it "a magnificent piece of horsemanship." [2]

Perhaps earlier than the Deer Trail competition was a more elaborate one held in San Antonio, and reported by John Duval in a book of which he says all the events happened, though not necessarily to the persons or in the sequence represented.[3] Participating were "Comanche warriors, decked out in their savage finery," Texas "rangers" and "a few Mexican rancheros, dressed in their steeple crown, broad brim sombreros, showy scarfs and 'slashed' trousers, holding gracefully in check the fiery mustangs on which they were mounted." [4]

Some of the events, such as picking up objects from the ground, shooting at targets from horses running at full speed, riding hanging by one leg from the saddle and firing under the horse's neck, were related to border warfare and the protection of herds. But it was the bronc riding that Duval found the most "interesting and exciting of them." Each contestant saddled his own horse in the ring without assistance. The winner was a ranger named McMullen, whose mount, "snorting and absolutely screaming with rage and terror, gave one tremendous bound, and then darted off at headlong speed across the prairie."

> At length, frantic with rage and fright, the horse reared straight up, and threw himself backward upon the ground. A cry of horror broke from the lips of the spectators, for every one supposed that McMullen would be crushed to death by the weight of his steed; but he was on the "qui vive" and sprang from under him just in time to save himself, and the moment the horse rose to his feet, we saw him seated again

[1] Quoted in *Rodeo de Santa Fe, Official Program* (1950), p. 35; and in Clifford P. Wistermeier, *Trailing The Cowboy* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1950), p. 344.

[2] Denver *Field and Farm,* July 8, 1869, quoted by Wistermeier, *Trailing the Cowboy,* p. 345.

[3] The description occurs in *The Young Explorers,* serialized in *Burke's Magazine for Boys and Girls,* 1870-71, and published as a part of the book *Early Time in Texas* (Austin, 1892). In the Preface (p. 10) Duval says, "The scenes and incidents described in the second part of the book are also *true* though not occurring just as stated, for I have connected them together in a continuous narrative (in which several fictitious characters have been introduced), because I thought they would be more likely to interest a reader in that form than they would if told in disconnected fragments." His fictitious characters are spectators at the contest.

[4] *Early Times in Texas,* pp. 73-74.

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in the saddle as calm and composed as though he were bestriding the gentlest hack that ever bore a country curate to his church.[5]

In view of the enthusiastic admiration they elicited, as well as the business they brought to town, it was to be expected that roping and riding contests would be staged throughout the cattle country. Those held before 1890 include the following: Austin, Texas, 1883; Pecos, Texas, 1883; San Antonio, 1883; Galveston, 1883; Mobeetie, Texas, 1884; Miles City, Montana, 1885; Albuquerque, 1886; Denver, 1887; Montrose, Colorado, 1887; San Antonio, 1888; Prescott, Arizona, 1888; Canadian, Texas, 1888; San Angelo, Texas, 1889.[6]

The Pecos contest, held on July 4, 1883, was staged to settle a long dispute among the ranch hands about which outfit had the best ropers. The news spread rapidly, and soon the town was overcrowded with people.

> Cash prizes were posted, and the leading ropers from each ranch were selected. Morgan Livingston of the NA ranch took first money, and Trav Windham second. There was a barbecue, and the town was crowded with people. Business was booming, especially around the saloons.[7]

Exactly one year before the Pecos contest a celebration had been held at North Platte, Nebraska, that initiated a series of events that was to bring the cowboy and his skills before millions in America and Europe. The ranchmen of that region decided to celebrate the Fourth of July with an "Old Glory Blowout" and appointed William Cody to get it up. Under the name of Buffalo Bill, Cody was already famous as a scout and stage actor whose role was to play himself in a melodrama of variant forms, but always involving Indians, cowboys, scouts and frontiersmen, a lost maiden and comic relief.[8] As he had long felt the need of a larger stage, he welcomed the opportunity. "I got out some handbills," he said later, "and sent them to all the ranches around for hundreds of miles and advertized in the papers that prizes would be given for some fancy cowboy stunts."[9] He expected about a hundred cowboys and a thousand responded.[10] To the cowboy events he added the attack on the Deadwood

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

[6] Westermeier, *Trailing the Cowboy*, pp. 344-76; Mary Lucille Deaton, "The History of the Rodeo" (Master's thesis, University of Texas, 1952).

[7] Reprinted in *The Cattleman*, XXIV (December 1942), 64.

[8] Henry Blackman Sell and Victor Weybright, *Buffalo Bill and the Wild West* (New York, 1955), p. 156.

[9] Richard J. Walsh and Milton S. Salsbury, *The Making of Buffalo Bill* (Indianapolis, 1926), p. 217.

[10] Don Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman, Okla., 1960), p. 290.

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stagecoach by Indians (he had used real Indians on the stage), horse races, shooting contests and a drive of a small herd of buffalo.[11] The attendance was gratifying. "North Platte had the biggest crowd it has ever had before or since."[12] "I tried it out on my neighbors," Cody said, "and they lived through it and liked it. I made up my mind I'd take the show East." [13]

For three decades Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show was to tour America and Europe and to bring the cowboy before millions and to win approval of the ranking military brass of both continents, the sporting plutocracy and the peerage and royalty of Europe, that is, of the taste makers of the era.[14]

The cowboys were not the whole of Cody's show. The program varied in detail from time to time, but the constant features were the reenactment of such events from Western history as an Indian attack on the Deadwood stage, a wagon train or a settler's cabin, or "Custer's Last Stand"; and displays of marksmanship and horsemanship.

The cowboys played various roles in these and in special events in addition to those in which they exhibited their own peculiar skills. As Buffalo Bill's faithful retainers they repulsed Indian attacks and fought in the Battle of the Little Big Horn, with Buck Taylor, "the King of the Cowboys" playing the role of Custer.[15] Johnny Baker, "The Cowboy Kid," along with Annie Oakley and Buffalo Bill, did exhibition shooting,[16] and in England Antonio Esquivel, "Champion Vaquero," riding Western ponies, won a relay race and five hundred pounds in competition with a British rider on thoroughbreds. His victory was attributed not to the superiority of his ponies, but to his greater agility in changing mounts.[17]

But the cowboys shone particularly in the portion of the program assigned to them. From the first performance to the last a section of the program, often billed under the title of "Cowboy Fun," was exclusively theirs. The events included picking up objects from the ground, roping, steer wrestling and "riding the buckers." [18] These latter were not always the property of the show, for wherever he went Cody extended an invitation to all who had unmanageable horses to bring them in to be ridden. One of the several to accept the challenge was the Italian nobleman the Duke of Sermonuta, whose stallions had defied all efforts of his men to tame them. Two were brought in and turned loose in the ring before

[11] Sell and Weybright, p. 133.
[12] Walsh and Salsbury, p. 170.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 218.
[14] Russell, pp. 324-32; Sell and Weybright, pp. 177 ff.
[15] Sell and Weybright, p. 156.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 196.
[17] Russell, p. 340.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 376.

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twenty thousand spectators. A New York *Herald* correspondent reported, "The brutes made springs into the air, darted hither and thither in all directions, but all in vain. In five minutes the cowboys had caught the wild horses, saddled, subdued, and bestrode them. Then the cowboys rode them around the arena while the dense crowd applauded with delight." [19]

The American cowboy was taking his place among the great horsemen of the world. Among the prominent Americans to express their admiration were Theodore Roosevelt and Mark Twain. The journalists also sang the praises of Buffalo Bill's cowboys. A New York *World* reporter who saw the show in 1886 particularly admired Buck Taylor, "who can stand in the path of any Mexican steer and turn it over by the horns." [20] The response of the London press was enthusiastic. The London *Era* quoted Henry Irving (soon to be knighted) as saying the show, which he had seen in America, was "an entertainment in which the whole of the most interesting episodes of life on the extreme frontier of civilization in America are expressed. . . . You have real cowboys with bucking horses, real buffaloes, great herds of steers, which are loosened and stampeded in the most realistic fashion imaginable. Then there are Indians who execute attacks on coaches driven full speed. No one can exaggerate the extreme excitement and 'go' of the whole performance." [21]

A reporter from the London *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* found all the excitement Irving had promised; and watching a cowboy perform, he was inspired to comment upon the paradox of wickedness as a virtue.

> Some six or eight skinsful of iniquity are successfully dealt with, amongst them the well known mare Dynamite. This is a fiend. Born a buck-jumper, and encouraged in her wickedness from a foal, she humps her back like an angry tom-cat, rises from the ground with her head between her hoofs, her legs stiff as the area railings, and comes down with a diabolical jerk, and at that uncomfortable angle which implies to the ordinary good rider, not only a peremptory notice to quit, but an implication to migrate to the adjoining parish. Her squeal is of itself sinful; it approaches bad language as near as a horse ever got. . . . Happy creature! Appreciated only on account of her perversity; valuable in direct proportion to her viciousness. What a delightful world it would be, and to what high office might we aspire in it, if a similarly inverted code of human morality prevailed amongst us.[22]

[19] Quoted by Sell and Weybright, p. 181, and by Russell, p. 352.
[20] Sell and Weybright, p. 151.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 162.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 168.

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Another London newspaper reporter was hardly less restrained in an account of another performance of this same mare, ridden by Jim Mitchell.

> She made a headlong dash and plunged with all her force into a fence, turned completely over head first and apparently falling upon the rider. . . . Poor Jim was dragged out, bleeding and maimed, and led away. What was the astonishment of the multitude, when the other refractory animals had had their sport, to see Dynamite led out, and the cowboy, limping and pale, come forward to make another attempt to ride her. . . . For fifteen minutes the fight went on between man and beast. . . . The cowboy got upon her back by some super-human skill, and then he was master.[23]

Exhibitions of this sort and eyewitness accounts of them must have had a powerful influence in altering the public image of the cowboy. The millions who saw men like Buck Taylor, Jim Lawson, Jim Mitchell, William (Bronco Bill) Irving, Johnny Baker, Antonio Esquivel and José Rozzalo perform did not readily associate them with the outlawry of the Texas border of the 1830s and 1840s, nor with cattle rustling and murder in Arizona in the early 1880s.

As the twentieth century moved toward its second decade, it became obvious that the traveling Wild West show with its tremendous overhead was doomed. When Buffalo Bill failed, it was hardly to be expected that Pawnee Bill (Gordon William Lillie), Zack Miller, Tom Mix or Tim McCoy could long succeed. One reason for their failure was the rise of the motion picture, which in spite of its early crudeness and frequent disregard of historical accuracy, could present most western themes with greater verisimilitude than was possible in the arena. Cody's Pony Express rider, for example, attracted much favorable comment. But the audience knew he was riding in Erastina Park, Staten Island, or Earl's Court, London, not in the Nevada desert. But in the presentation of the cowboy events, the advantage was in favor of the arena. The men, the horses and cattle were physically present, and there was always suspense about the outcome. The cowboys had a saying: "There never was a horse that couldn't be rode; there never was a man that couldn't be throwed." Sometimes Dynamite won.

In the late 1880s and early 1890s more and more western communities began staging riding and roping contests at recurrent intervals.[24] After the First World War entrepreneurs began promoting contests, for which they selected the Spanish term rodeo (roundup). Some of the promoters

[23] Russell, p. 321.
[24] For the history of the rodeo see C. P. Westermeier, *Man, Beast, Dust* (Denver, 1947).

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were dishonest,[25] and to prevent the frauds they practiced was one purpose that led to the organization of the Rodeo Association of America in 1929 (later the International Rodeo Association), to be followed soon by the Cowboy's Association of America.

Besides formulating and enforcing a code of ethics, these organizations prescribe minute rules governing all contests, obviously necessary when championships are awarded on the basis of points accumulated in a series of contests. In bronc riding, for example, the rules specify not only the length of time the rider must remain on the horse, but the kind of saddle and headgear he can use, the hand in which the rein must be held, the position of the other hand and how the horse is to be spurred. The associations have also arranged circuits so that a performer can participate in many local contests, and, if his score is good enough, take part in the grand finale in Madison Square Garden. The skills displayed there have little relation to the cowwork on a ranch of the present day. Rodeo performing is now a professional sport.

It is a professional sport, however, that grew out of the daily labor of the cowboy of the nineteenth century. An older equestrian sport which had no relation to work has passed away. The tournament, as it was called, made its appearance in the Old South, significantly, soon after the publication of Scott's *Ivanhoe* in 1819, and spread as far west as Texas. It was modeled upon the tournament of Elizabethan England, where knights like Sir Philip Sidney tilted in the lists, not in serious combat, but to display their horsemanship. The tournament course in America was two hundred yards long. Beginning fifty yards from the starting line and spaced fifty yards apart were three posts with horizontal arms, from each of which was suspended a metal ring about two inches in diameter. The object of the contestant was to catch on a wooden spear as many rings as he could while riding at a dead run. (He would be disqualified if he failed to make a specified speed.) Each contestant made three runs, but the second run was not made until all contestants ran the first, and so with the third. This arrangement added suspense and permitted the horses to rest between runs. First, second and third winners were declared.[26]

The tournament was chiefly valued for the ceremonial accompanying it and the ball that followed. The contestants were called knights, and each entered under a name chosen by himself. Those who took part in one tournament held in Virginia in pre-Civil War times were listed as follows: The Knight of Ivanhoe, The Knight of The Lone Star, The Knight of Waverly, The Knight of The Old Dominion, The Knight of Mephisto-

[25] Westermeier, *Man, Beast, Dust*, pp. 62, 96.

[26] J. Frank Dobie, "The Tournament in Texas," *Texas Folklore Publication V* (Austin, 1926), pp. 93-103.

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pheles and The Knight of The Potomac. Though the custom was not universal these knights wore masks, and although they were probably known to the spectators, their identities were supposed to be secret until after the contest. Like the knights of other tournaments of the time, they wore elaborate costumes. The Knight of Ivanhoe had on "what was intended to represent a coat of mail," and the Knight of Mephistopheles was dressed in "black and scarlet, with horns and a tail that provoked wild merriment." [27] The horses were decorated with ribbons and rosettes. Each knight was dedicated to a lady, whose favor he often wore. When the last run had been made the contestants drew up in a semicircle, and first, second and third prizes were awarded by a master of ceremonies selected for his oratorical achievements. In florid style he praised all the contestants for "their prowess and devotion to the service of beauty." [28] The winners received their trophies, usually wreaths, and humbly presented them to their ladies. The lady chosen by the winner of first place became the Queen of Love and Beauty at the ball.

It is apparent that the tournament was related to the European tradition of courtly love and that in America it celebrated the myth of the feudal South. The time would come when the myth could not sustain the ritual and the ritual could not sustain the myth, and the tournament would be an anachronism unrelated to the American experience. The horsemen of America fought to extend their domain and to protect the property and the lives of themselves and their families. A mystic sublimation of sexual love played little part in their efforts. The tournament would pass away.

The rodeo would persist even in a machine age. Almost from the beginning of their national existence Americans had been searching for a past, for a key to their history, for a concept that would make America more than an appendage of England. The fame of frontier folk heroes like Boone, Crockett and Carson, and of Leatherstocking and his successors in fiction, led them to find this key in their mythicized frontier experience, a key confirmed, it was thought, by Turner and his successors. Within this century, thanks to the mass media, the cowboy would become the popular symbol of the American frontier. The rodeo would survive. It would survive by becoming a ritual in which, on the obvious level, the last frontiersman, the cowboy, or, more accurately, a man in ceremonial garb representing him, re-enacts the conquest of the West, and on a deeper level symbolizes man's conquest of nature.

[27] Mrs. Sally McCarty Pleasants, *Old Virginia Days and Ways: Reminiscences of Mrs. Sally McCarty Pleasants*, edited by her daughter, Lucy Lee Pleasants (Menasha, Wis., 1916), p. 159.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

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Afternote

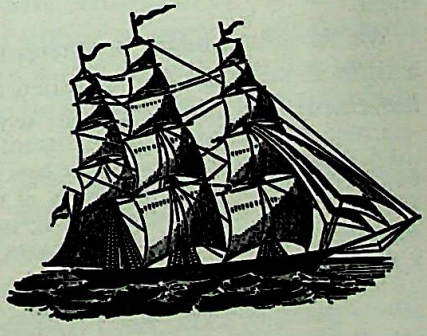
Continuing scholarly interest in the meaning of Western fiction is indicated, among other ways, by the publication of James K. Folsom's *The American Western Novel* (New Haven, College & University Press, 1966).

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Angles of Vision: America at Home and Abroad



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Eric L. McKitrick · Stanley Elkins

Institutions in Motion[1]

NOW THAT FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER'S ESSAYS HAVE GONE THROUGH A FULL cycle of criticism and defense, we are fully able to see that as a logician, and as a formulator of specifically testable hypotheses, Turner had his shortcomings. But the continuing vitality of Turner's inspiration represents something better than logic; it commands us to keep on thinking. In return for not forgetting him and his ideas on westward movement, Turner would surely not have thought it a bad intellectual bargain at all to have us, sixty-odd years later, using those ideas somewhat freely but still using them—not so much as "hypotheses" but as ice-breakers, as starting points for innumerable conversations about certain basic features of American life. Hypotheses are expendable and cheap, and anyone can make his own (we will offer a few in this paper); but a standing incentive for making them is something else again, something not appearing every day, and therefore not cheap and not expendable. This is the sort of deference we must keep on giving Turner: the conversation may no longer come out quite the way he intended—but still, he started it. The best of Turner's critics in the past have had the deep good sense to recognize this principle, in urging not the abandonment of Turner's notions but their restatement and reformulation. Those notions can be restated over and over, being broad enough to insure against anyone's ever having the last word—which is all for the best. There is really nothing like an open subject, so constituted that it stays open.

We thought it might be interesting, a few years ago, to try conversing a little about what Turner called the "democratic" aspects of westward movement, but using different words.[2] What caught our interest then

1 A special acknowledgment must here be made to our friend Peter H. Rossi, Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago, for his contributions to this essay. His enthusiasm, suggestions, criticisms, and the fact that we have made use of three separate items of his own published work (cited variously below), virtually make him a third collaborator.

2 Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier," *Political Science Quarterly*, LXIX, Part I (September, 1954), 321-53; Part II (December, 1954), 565-602.

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was the profound effect upon *individuals* of a certain kind of experience —the experience, literally forced on great numbers of them, of participating at a very intense pitch in the process of setting up new communities. The man of no particular status who has become accustomed to taking a personal part in the making of various public and semipublic decisions represents a distinct cultural type, as Tocqueville noticed, a type produced by the special conditions of American life. Now might it not be equally possible to start another conversation, this time about the effects on *institutions* of being transplanted, not necessarily westward but simply from one place to another—in a culture one of whose basic themes has always been movement?

Turner himself seems to have been a little free with the notion of institutions, and his critics have very properly pointed it out. He tended to imply that the uncivilized frontier automatically created a setting in which *new* institutions could spring into being, and thus somewhat overmade a case which in some ways was not a bad one. We know that it was more accurately a matter of re-creating on the frontier institutions long familiar elsewhere. But still, Turner did have a hunch that *something* happened to institutions in the process, even though his formulations, clothed in poetic metaphor, may have had their ambiguous side.

Why, then, should it not be possible to have another try at this notion? What would happen if we should simply set aside the forest metaphors—the hunting shirts and coonskin caps—even the frontier itself (metaphors are certainly the life of trade in ideas, but they are also coercive and should occasionally be changed) and just ask the same question in a different form? Here is a culture which has been perennially, even chronically, characterized by mass movements of people: not only from East to West, but West to East and South to North—and, not least of all, from Old World to New. What happens to the institutions and institutional habits which these people carry with them—most especially when the institutions have been brought all the way from Europe?

Two possible notions on this point have occurred to us, notions which Turner might or might not have been willing to accept as corollaries to his own thoughts on institutions. One is that the great strains put on institutions in the very process of transplanting them, and particularly the numerous problems involved in forming and stabilizing a community in a new setting, will have forced these institutions to assume vastly expanded functions which they did not previously have—even when their formal structure may remain more or less unchanged. This is most strikingly seen in the case of European institutions set up in American immigrant communities. The other notion is that the survival of institutions at large in this country depends to a considerable degree on

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their very portability. This in itself seems to have made a major difference between our institutions and those of Europe. These two propositions will form the basis of the present essay.

As group after group of European newcomers set up familiar Old World institutions in their New World communities during the peak periods of immigration, that aspect of the process most striking at our end was of course the spectacle of European ways being tenaciously clung to. But an equally interesting, and in some ways far more dramatic side of the thing was the aspect not of institutional persistence but of institutional change (the two are not necessarily inconsistent): the way it looked, that is, not to us but to them. What they saw were the stupefying new problems they faced as members of immigrant communities, the greatly expanded uses to which they had to put their old institutions, and the remarkable transformations which were brought about in those institutions in a relatively short time—transformations so striking that the people in the old country would hardly have recognized the old familiar forms. There are innumerable examples.

An outstanding one is the Catholic Church. Transferred to this country was the concept of the parish—essentially a country concept—as well as a church which in European countries had been without exception either the state church or the next thing to it. Reconstituted here, the Church faced a situation in which the majority of Catholics were collecting in urban areas (the Catholic population of the United States has always been predominantly urban), and in which the Church for its operations got no state support whatever. It became necessary to carry on the very complex problems of urban parish life through voluntary organization. This required not only new techniques for sustaining the faith but also a vast expansion of internal energy. The result was new functions as well as a great enlargement of old ones which previously may have been little more than marginal. For example, there was the parochial school system: the United States is the only country in the world where mass parochial education is supported by voluntary contributions.[3] Or take the Knights of Columbus: here is a uniquely American service organization (not unlike the Elks, Rotary and Masons), as well as a secret order connected with the Church. This sort of thing,

[3] There is an excellent short monograph on this subject: Peter and Alice Rossi, "Background and Consequences of Parochial School Education," *Harvard Educational Review*, XXVII (Summer, 1957), 168-99. The Rossis make a special point of the fact that it was in 1884, when the flood tide of Irish and German immigration was swelling the ranks of the Church, that the Third Plenary Council at Baltimore decreed the establishment of mass education in all parishes. One may imagine the sharp stepping-up of activity, energy and participation within the parish that must have resulted from the very process of raising the needed funds.

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in European Catholicism, was implacably opposed as subversive to the Universal Church and its monopoly on ritual.[4] The Catholic charities and multiple welfare agencies in this country far exceed in complexity, system and scope anything comparable in Europe.[5] And finally, few Catholic sociologists have failed to make a point of the expanded role of the parish priest himself amid the complex claims and problems of urban life.[6] All this grew out of a situation that first erupted into being in the 1880's and has kept proliferating ever since.

On a smaller scale, and with rural variations, we see much the same picture with the Lutheran Church and its Scandinavian and German constituencies. Religious workers from the state churches in Scandinavia visiting here have been much struck by the great multiplication of secu-

[4] In Europe, the papacy (with much provocation) had long fulminated against Freemasonry, and to a certain extent the tradition of official opposition to secret orders carried over to America. The more conservative bishops were much disturbed by the activities and success of the Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Sons of Temperance, Ancient Order of Hibernians, Knights of Labor and even the Grand Army of the Republic. But the more perceptive clergy began to see by the 1880's that the secret orders were performing a vital function for the lonely dwellers of the fast-growing cities during that period, and that the Church could best combat their influence by providing its own substitutes. Bishop Winand Wigger, writing in 1882 to Cardinal McCluskey of New York, pointed out the essential innocence of the American societies (not the case with the European ones, whose anti-religious animus was a constant threat to ecclesiastical authority), and suggested that the Church, rather than wasting its energies fighting them, would do much better to promote *Catholic* societies of the same sort, with the insurance benefits, secret ritual, civic activities and personal satisfactions currently offered by the secular societies. By the turn of the century the Knights of Columbus had proven itself a rousing success in all these respects. See Fergus MacDonald, *The Catholic Church and the Secret Societies in the United States* (New York: U. S. Catholic Historical Society, 1946); and Joseph J. Thompson, *A History of the Knights of Columbus in Illinois* (Chicago, 1921).

[5] Throughout John O'Grady's *Catholic Charities in the United States* (Washington, D. C.: National Conference of Catholic Charities, 1931) run two continuing themes in accounting for the great proliferation of the Church's charitable functions in the 1880's and later. One is the constant threat of Protestantism; the other is the tremendous strains imposed on the Church and its organization by the ever-mounting streams of immigration. The welfare agencies had become so numerous and far-flung by 1921 that another organization, the National Catholic Welfare Conference (growing out of the Catholic War Council of 1917), had to be created to co-ordinate the functions of all the rest. Every charitable endeavor imaginable was included in its activities. See Theodore Roemer, *The Catholic Church in the United States* (St. Louis: Herder, 1950), esp. pp. 363-66.

[6] See, e.g., Joseph Fichter, S.J., *Social Relations in the Urban Parish* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), pp. 123-37; also David H. Fosselman, C.S.C., "The Parish in Urban Communities," Celestine J. Nuesse and Thomas J. Harte, eds., *The Sociology of the Parish* (Milwaukee: Bruce Pub. Co., 1950), pp. 150-51. By contrast, a problem of considerable dimensions seems presently to be facing the French priest, and the French Church at large, through their increasing failure to make and maintain connections with the French working classes. This is discussed most perceptively by the Abbé G. Michonneau in his *Revolution in a City Parish* (Westminster, Md.:

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lar functions performed by the church in the American Lutheran community. They have actually been rather shocked that the church should be sponsoring such far-flung social activities as dances and hayrides. The point may be that the church, though officially protected in the Scandinavian countries, impinges far less on the lives of the people there than it does here, despite the distressing secular overtones of American Lutheranism.[7] All this grew out of the problems of cushioning, for vast numbers of foreigners of Lutheran faith, some of the impact of moving into an alien culture. While we are saying here that transplantation involves all sorts of problems in itself, we should add that it makes a difference what kind of culture the institution (Lutheran church or whatever) is being transplanted into. In the case of this culture, one problem specifically was crucial—that of sheer competition. Here was an organization, now perforce a voluntary one, moving into a setting full of other voluntary organizations, none of which enjoyed any special official position, and each of which had to fend for itself. The result was a direct incentive to the institution to act pragmatically, regardless of prior traditional commitments. The traditional aspects thus underwent the most rigorous tests: not only must the institution meet problems not encountered before, but failure to do so meant that it faced being deserted by its own constituents.[8] Such pressures are severely jarring to institutional inertia. Moreover, the bulk of the adjustment had to be made quickly—in the early stages, when most needed. It would be in these circumstances that change could be most radical, occurring with fewest regrets and with a minimum of traditional drag.

Newman Press, 1952). See also Emile Pin, S.J., *Pratique Religieuse et Classes Sociales dans une Paroisse Urbaine, Saint-Pothin à Lyon* (Paris: Editions Spes, 1956), pp. 400-13. The network of secular activities so successful in sustaining communication and contact within the urban parish in America finds very little counterpart in France. There, the transition over time from village to city seems to have been more gradual and more indigenous, and the resulting problems of maintaining the faith much less dramatic and immediate, for the Church to have reacted with anything like the promptness and decision which characterized its activities in this country. A slow withering away of vitality seems to have been the result.

7 We are indebted, for this point, to conversations with Dean Jerald C. Brauer of the Federated Theological Faculty, University of Chicago, and with Mrs. Jessie S. West of San Luis Obispo, California, following her return from a Scandinavian tour in the summer of 1956. By comparison with American Lutheranism, it appears that church attendance nowadays, especially in Sweden, is alarmingly low.

8 Sidney Mead has argued very persuasively that this competitive aspect has had much to do with the way in which sharp doctrinal differences have tended to be played down among American Protestant denominations. "If the group *has* a confessional basis, its attitude toward it is likely to become promotional and propagandistic, as for example, witness Missouri Synod Lutheranism. Anything that seems to stand in the way of or hinder the effectiveness of such promotion is likely to be considered divisive and a threat to the internal unity and general effectiveness of the

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The same process, with still other variations, might have been observed in the American Jewish community during the heyday of immigration fifty and sixty years ago. One can find, back in the nineteenth-century *shtetl*—the tiny village in the Polish Pale—the "germs" of voluntary associations. These were associations supported by the community's own efforts, and had only quasi-official status. There were organizations for giving dowries to poor brides, for educating orphans, providing the indigent with matzos at Passover, boarding rabbinical students and so forth.[9] While it all operated on rather a limited level—things had to be sliced fairly thin in the *shtetl*—amazing things happened when these "germs" were cast into the thick urban setting of New York's East Side in the 1890's and early 1900's. They grew like lush jungle plants, spreading throughout a community populated with Jews from every corner of Europe, among whom local customs had shown the widest diversity. The result was a mass of Jewish charitable, educational, social and cultural organizations: voluntary, as they had been to some extent in the old country, but no longer with the full sanctions of tradition. Everything now became a promotion in which thousands were taking part, and it is no wonder that the energy thus generated produced countless organizations with a tangled maze of overlapping functions—as Professor MacIver found many years later in his study of Jewish community-relations agencies.[10] In any case, the consequences for

group." (Our political parties, of course, operate on this same principle.) Professor Mead thinks that these same elements (promotion and competition) account for much of the distinctive American character of denominational leadership: "This means that whatever else top denominational leaders *may* be, they *must* be denominational politicians. Tocqueville was surprised to find that everywhere in America 'you meet with a politician where you expected to find a priest.'" Sidney E. Mead, "Denominationalism: the Shape of Protestantism in America," *Church History*, XXIII (December, 1954) 3-32. We might add that it was competition that inspired the Catholic parochial school movement referred to above: competition with Protestantism for the souls of Catholic children—more generally, competition with an entire Protestantized culture. See also notes 4 and 5 above, and 11 below.

[9] For a fascinating account of these *shtetl* associations see Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life Is With People: The Jewish Little-Town of Eastern Europe* (New York: International Universities Press, 1952), pp. 202-9. Such associations actually extended back to the 13th and 14th centuries. Examples may be found in Salo Baron, *The Jewish Community, its History and Structure to the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1942), pp. 319-50.

[10] The MacIver study, commissioned in 1950 by the National Community Relations Advisory Council to explore possibilities of greater co-ordination among member agencies, was the subject of some notoriety in American Jewish circles and was never published. Its conclusions, seen through the "rational" eye of an outsider, appeared to call for eliminating and simplifying many of these agencies' overlapping functions and conflicting areas of activity. But of course one of the by-products of the American

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the immigrant groups themselves must have been quite profound, not in the sense of retarding the Americanization process but of promoting it.[11] For one thing, here was the personal experience of direct and manifold activity, of decision-making on a public and semipublic level, by people who now quite properly saw themselves as doing all sorts of "American" things. Moreover, in the East Side ghetto (really no ghetto at all) was created something of a new abstraction. It was filled with people who had been Rumanian Jews, Polish Jews, Russian Jews, Lithuanian Jews—and who were now simply all *Jews*; this was a stage in the amalgamation process in many ways more decisive than that from foreigner to American. There is thus much point to Professor Handlin's story about the Russian Jew whose bright idea it was that the best way of Americanizing a new colony of Turkish Jews in New York was to teach them Yiddish.[12]

In short, then, after the initial yank, and with people and institutions catapulted into a culture full of dynamism and movement, we can see that the expanded uses to which immigrant groups have put their old

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experience in general was fierce competition between voluntary agencies and resistance to encroachments upon individual autonomy. Two of NCRAC's member agencies in particular (the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith) attacked the report with great bitterness. See Harry I. Barron, " 'The MacIver Report,' " *Jewish Social Service Quarterly*, XXVIII, 313-32. The rapid growth of Jewish organizational life in America is described by Samuel C. Kohs, "The Jewish Community," *The Jews, Their History, Culture, and Religion*, ed., Louis Finkelstein (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1949), IV, 1267-322. For such growth in Chicago, see Louis Wirth's classic study, *The Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), pp. 171-93.

11 We believe that it was Oscar Handlin who first erected this process into a fundamental principle of Americanization. For instance: "The man who joined a mutual aid association, who took a newspaper or went to the theater [in this case a Yiddish newspaper, the Yiddish theater], was adjusting thereby to the environment of the United States. These were not vestiges of any European forms, but steps in his Americanization." Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1951), p. 185. Even in religion the promotional, competitive aspects of American voluntary associations (referred to earlier in connection with Protestant denominationalism) had very much of a counterpart in the struggles between Orthodox, Conservative and Reform sects of American Judaism to retain the loyalties of their constituents. In 1908, when the Central Jewish Institute was formed in New York with a wide range of social and recreational facilities joined to the place of worship, one of its leaders declared, with all the pride of an American booster: "While strictly orthodox, it completely surpasses any Reform Temple in modernity of conception." Oscar Handlin, *Adventure in Freedom: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in America* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1954), p. 160. Thus while one function of competition within Judaism in an American setting may have been bitterness (and there was considerable), another was vitality and growth.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 162. A counterpart, of course, would be the case of the Sicilian who had to come to New York in order to discover that he was an "Italian."

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institutions, and the variety of new things they have been willing to do with them, may have constituted the least appreciated aspect of their Americanization. So much for our first proposition, the one on transformation of immigrant institutions—there are many other examples to support this principle[13]—but our other corollary is not unconnected with it.

Our second corollary on institutions in motion—to reintroduce it now—is the observation that one of the typical qualities of American institutions in general is their essential portability. There is a compelling aptness in Frank Thistlethwaite's symbol of American society as the "Caravan":

> a society of traders committed to the journey; variously recruited; bound together by compelling but temporary loyalties; conscious that there will be other caravans, other companions; discounting yesterday's crises, anticipating tomorrow's opportunities, and navigating by the stars.[14]

And to this symbol we might add another, the symbol of interchangeable parts.

There are at least two things worth pointing out in connection with this whole "portability" notion. One has to do with the culturally ingrained habits of individuals who take it for granted not only that the chances are about fifty-fifty against their ending their lives in the same community where they were born, but also that their careers are more than likely to be enacted in several widely-spaced locales before they are done.[15] These habits and expectations make it possible for people to take up connections more or less automatically in new places, and to reach out for voluntary associations similar in all essentials to those in which they participated in the old place. If one is looking for

[13] Such examples might include the Turnvereins and Sokols, of the German and Czech communities respectively. Particularly interesting are the Sokols, which were founded in Bohemia in 1862 as nationalist gymnastic societies, and which spread with such vigor in America that it came to be said, "No Czech is a real Czech unless he belongs to a Sokol." Eugene McCarthy, "The Bohemians in Chicago and their Benevolent Societies" (unpublished Doctor's thesis, University of Chicago, 1950), p. 45. Much of the vitality of the Czechoslovak nationalist movement was in fact generated in America, and an overwhelming share of the money for it was raised here. The whole movement that created Czechoslovakia came to fruition in Pittsburgh, under the auspices of the Sokols and other American Czech and Slovak societies.

[14] Frank Thistlethwaite, "The Citadel and the Caravan: Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century," *American Quarterly*, IX (Spring 1957), 24.

[15] "About one person in every five shifts residence over a year's time. About three-quarters of our urban citizens were living in 1950 in places in which they did not reside in 1940." Peter H. Rossi, *Why Families Move* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1955), p. 1.

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prototypes, there is none better, of course, than the westward movement of the nineteenth century. The reverse counterpart is the current difficulty in England of getting a man to move six miles to work in a steel plant instead of the decaying textile mill he is now in, threatening as it does to tear up a whole network of rooted arrangements for him. The other point is that our institutions themselves have a peculiarly pragmatic and un-rooted quality. Even for such venerable institutions as the Dodgers and Giants, hoary with local tradition, there were no protections against the siren call of California and pay-as-you-go TV. This is because the critical working arrangements of so many of our institutions are built in, all adding up to something that can be packed up and set down again almost anywhere.

Let us close with three examples. One is the automatic creation, in postwar housing developments, of voluntary organizations all the way up to institutions of local government. One of the remarkable features of post-1945 life has been a kind of renaissance of certain basic nineteenth-century habits—the burgeoning of public and semipublic participation by great numbers of individuals—out of which, in place after place, a whole series of very intricate civic arrangements could literally pop up overnight. The response to problems came very naturally; the instinctive thing was to get up a meeting.[16]

A second example, needing no elaboration for anyone who was in it, was the United States Army in wartime. Here was a great *ad hoc*, temporarily improvised machine for defending ourselves, ever tually the most intricate one the world ever saw, and with every part interchangeable. Not only was its own mobility boundless, but its Tables of Organization were so standardized, down to the last detail of the physical arrangements, that a man could move from unit to unit and end up in virtually the same surroundings every time. Winston Churchill and his staff officers, inspecting our training camps early in wartime, found it hard to comprehend how an effective military organization could be created on such a mechanical basis—not growing organically, as it were, out of units which had some kind of prior "traditions."[17] In this sense, D-Day represented the full unfolding of a unique institutional logic.

Let our final example be that of the Bell Telephone Company. Here again is an institution so portable, so standardized and so self-contained,

[16] Very enlightening on this point are William H. Whyte, Jr., "The Future, c/o Park Forest," *Fortune*, June 1953, pp. 126-31, 186-96; and Leon Festinger, W. Schachter and Kurt Back, *Social Pressures in Informal Groups* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1949), a study of postwar housing at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

[17] This story comes from Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948), p. 192.

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that it is possible to go almost anywhere and set up a Bell system simply by consulting the appropriate manuals. So thoroughly, indeed, have these features of portability and "interchangeable parts" been built into this institution that, ironically enough, certain new, subtle and altogether unanticipated problems have recently crept in to kink up some of the company's vital energy, requiring the diagnostic services of a sociologist. It appears that the Bell executives, in the specific communities where Bell systems operated, were finding themselves with no local influence and were suffering in morale. The leaders of the local civic associations, in which men of executive status normally take part, would have little to do with them. So completely self-contained was the institution, so fully portable, that its executives were automatically considered "outsiders," and were shut out from one of the most ancient satisfactions of American life—that of participating in local civic affairs. This, quite properly intimated the sociologist, was "dysfunctional." [18]

All this may now seem pretty far afield from Frederick Jackson Turner. He was less concerned with hypotheses and corollaries than with inspiration and metaphor—although, to repeat our opening thought, this hardly need be regarded as a bad thing. There is nothing quite like an inspired metaphor, such as "frontier," for stirring things up, for getting something going and keeping it going; something is always left over for next time. And Turner did, after all, represent the first major effort—after Tocqueville—to deal with motion as a basic cultural fact in American life.

Afternote

This article should be read as a sequel and corollary to our "A Meaning for Turner's Thesis," cited above in footnote 2.

Eric McKitrick is a Professor of History at Columbia University. Stanley Elkins is a Professor of History at Smith College. [This article appeared in Vol. XII, No. 2, Pt. 1 (Summer, 1960).]

[18] Peter H. Rossi, "Industry and Community: A Pilot Study of Community Relations of Local Telephone Companies and Other Businesses," *Report No. 64, National Opinion Research Center* (mimeographed), University of Chicago, 1957.

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Frank Thistlethwaite

The Citadel and the Caravan: Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century

MOST Englishmen at the Salzburg Seminar in American Studies find themselves, usually to their surprise, interpreting Americans to Europeans. In some respects Scandinavia may be nearer the United States; but the Janus-faced British, in their Atlantic islands, are the key to American relations with western Europe, and to an Atlantic community.

By Atlantic community, I take it we mean a shared culture as opposed to the mutual interest of an Atlantic alliance against external threat. NATO has failed to generate an effective sense of common cultural inheritance. Some very brave young Hungarians, on the fringes of the western world, have reminded us that nationalism and religious tradition are still the most powerful challenge to alien tyranny. And the revival by the British of the forceful methods of nineteenth-century diplomacy once again defines the limits of extra-national collaboration. We should pay solemn tribute to these facts; and relearn the lesson that national societies are the ultimate entities of culture. Otherwise we, as well as the Russians, build on sand.

As far as Anglo-American relations are concerned, politeness, sentimentality and complacence have led to an almost total breakdown in communication. The clichés of a common language, the common law, and representative institutions, excite no more than a perfunctory response. The common language, if by language we mean true communication, hardly exists. The story of civil liberties, from Sacco and Vanzetti to McCarthy, has convinced many English people that the spirit of the English common law has evaporated in this country. Although a Member of Parliament

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may sigh wistfully after the joys of being a United States Senator, meetings between parliamentarians and congressmen tend to end in bafflement and frustration. And over Suez, the temporising and shifting tactics of the United States, contrasted with the secret and ruthless acts of Her Majesty's present ministers bring home again the wide difference in the theory and practice of politics in the two countries. The common inheritance is now expressed in such different styles and customs, that it is all but unrecognisable. The Churchillian rhetoric rings hollow. If that inheritance is again to be a harmonising force it must be rethought. Meanwhile a sense of cousinhood is preserved among a few English people who are convinced that "their" America, usually the patrician coteries of the eastern seaboard, is the real thing; there is a widely diffused, but dangerously sentimental, warming of hearts to American generosity; and sections of the British public eclectically help themselves to "I Love Lucy" or "A Streetcar Named Desire," Billy Graham or Rock 'n Roll, costume jewelry or the split-level house, without Americanization or a sense of common culture.

Any analysis must dig deeper than the educated Anglo-Saxon tradition in which our parents were brought up. At the risk of being amateurish I must begin in terms of social psychology.

The first instinctive, inarticulate reaction of Englishmen and Americans to one another derives from a common folk memory. It is the moral conflict between the man who stuck it out at home and the man who struck out for himself: between him who compromised with inherited institutions and him who invented his own. This conflict had its dramatic denouement in 1776; but it had been the elemental Anglo-American relation from the time of the Puritans; and it has been quickened by nineteenth-century emigrants and the return of twentieth-century G.I.'s, businessmen and academics. For Americans, to get out from under has been the moral choice; for Englishmen, it has been the act of a quitter. This impulsive reaction has usually been overlaid by more consciously rationalised responses; but we have to reckon with it when we interpret the prejudice aroused whether by a jazzy necktie or by a Secretary of State's remarks about colonialism. The conflict of uprooting is part of English folk experience. America has been the Englishman's black market world; fearful, fascinating and illegitimate.

"But," you will say, "you, too, had your revolution." And so we did; indeed we share it with you. However, it was three centuries ago; and its scars have all but disappeared from the body politic. You, on the other hand, although one hesitates to beg a bushel of questions, have been, I still believe, a continuous revolution. If there be any truth in a German pupil's wry remark that we are Stalinists and you are Leninists, we are at least Stalinists of three centuries. In any candid view we are, in fact, an *ancien*

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régime, perhaps the only one left in Europe. Such a view may surprise you; but I believe that events since 1945 merely confirm it. And this brings me on from amateur psychology to amateur sociology.

Imagine, for purposes of comparison, two societies, American and British, which I will call the Caravan and the Citadel. The Caravan is a society of traders committed to the journey; variously recruited; bound together by compelling but temporary loyalties; conscious that there will be other caravans, other companions; discounting yesterday's crises, anticipating tomorrow's opportunities, and navigating by the stars. The Citadel is a society of guardians protecting a crossroads of traffic; close in kin; governed by custom in an unquestioned hierarchy of authority; adapting inherited offices and chambers to changing uses, but conscious that the Citadel and its duties are fixed and permanent.

Britain is, in fact, a highly integrated society; bonded by well-recognised institutions and classes, in which authority devolves downwards from an apex, the Crown, and in which all institutions have their share of inherited authority. Vitally important contrasts with America follow from this.

Firstly, the British are intensely homogeneous. If for ethnic reasons alone, the rhythm of psychological responses is remarkably uniform; everyone can identify everyone else; there are no strangers.

Secondly, we are governed by received tradition. Stability is the norm and our attitude to change is static, not dynamic; a matter of the perpetual and grudging adjustment of an existing framework.

Thirdly, power and its sanctions devolve downwards. The crown-subject relation is fundamental. The constitutional convention whereby the Crown is the fount of all authority and honour involves more than symbolism. As you know, democracy in Britain is the result of the gradual extension of political liberties downwards to ever broader interests, not, as in America, the granting of authority by the people to government. "The liberties of Englishmen" are prescriptive privileges which have become customary, not natural rights; and John Locke is far more America's political philosopher than that of his own countrymen. With us, equality is subservient to liberty, and democracy mixed with more qualitative elements. This institutional character extends beyond politics. Church, army and navy, bench, bar, universities, the royal societies, the *Times,* the B.B.C., the Federation of British Industries, the Trades Union Council, and many others, form a highly integrated structure of related institutions, each with its semi-official place and authority in a corporate community under the Crown. And by a curious calcifying process, yesterday's rebels take royal patronage today, trades unionists become institutionalised as peers of the realm and the Leader of the Parliamentary Opposition becomes Her Majesty's paid servant.

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Fourthly, this hierarchical structure is reinforced by class. You, too, are not without class hardening; and with us there has always been a high degree of class mobility. But with us the term has a depth of meaning and an organic function, without parallel in the simpler definitions of your sociologists. I have no time to go into this; but the important points are, firstly, that with us the class hierarchy reforms with almost biological persistence after each socio-economic upheaval; and secondly, unlike that of this country, it is, in all its subtle gradations, a universally recognised social phenomenon, in which everyone knows his place. One may in time better or worsen that place; but one can be effective only by accepting it and playing the full social role implied by it.

The institutional and class structure supports, and is governed by, what it is fashionable nowadays to call "The Establishment"; not just the Established Church and the Court; but the whole apparatus of authority in all its connections, from the Editor of the *Times*, the Director-General of the B.B.C., the Governor of the Bank of England, to Oxford and Cambridge, the Inns of Court, the clubs of Pall Mall and Transport House, down to quite humble and provincial auxiliaries.

So institutionalised is English life that Englishmen instinctively live and have their being in their appropriate sodalities. To this, I believe, there is no exact American parallel. Americans, also, live to some extent by their sodalities; but to an Englishman their allegiances appear to be less to formal institutions than to those individuals with whom they are, for the time being, thrown together; and there seems something a little forced about the joiner, whether the Elk or the enthusiastic attender of a class reunion. In English eyes, such American associations appear, in a sense, as synthetic devices to supply the lack of a natural ethos based upon traditional loyalties. Whereas English associations are dovetailed into a highly articulated structure, their American equivalents remain isolated and self-determined, bearing no relation to any larger whole, particular "in" groups against the menacing "out" groups of a pluralistic society. Each sets its own standards and identifies itself self-consciously in its own fashion with the American way of life. Self-consciousness is a key to the difference. It would not occur to an English trade union branch to sing "God Save the King," or to an English Church to include in its standing order of service a verse from "Jerusalem" or any other equivalent to "America." One's Englishry is taken for granted, and, after a perfunctory toast to the Queen, one can get on with the business of being a particular kind of Englishman.

One further aspect of our hierarchical structure is relevant. Like most things from political opinions to dress fashions, intellectual ideas and taste in the arts also devolve downwards. English culture, in the belle-lettristic,

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not the anthropological, sense, remains aristocratic. Our educational system, as you know, despite a complete career open to talent, remains highly selective. Our universities, especially the apex of Oxbridge, have the primary function of educating an elite. Their social status is high, far higher than that of universities as a whole in the United States. They are part of the Establishment, and their connection with its other parts, especially the great world of Westminster and Whitehall, is close. A number of visiting American academics since the War have been impressed by the discovery of the intimate and casual traffic between a Cambridge combination room, the Athenaeum and a Treasury sanctum; and the solidarity of the educated classes, moving in and out of public life, has provided an effective cushion protecting academic freedom from mass pressures. For academic freedom in Britain is not democratic, but an inheritance from the great Whig, aristocratic tradition. The educated, professional classes, including the higher echelons of business, still form an intelligentsia, with common and articulate attitudes which provide a true vehicle of communication. A historian need not make the choice between writing a monograph for a few colleagues, a textbook for students, or a best-seller for the book clubs. His peers are a small, educated, though not learned, public in close touch with the world of affairs. The mode of scholarship has been that of a leisured class of gentlemen: amateur, non-competitive, literary, eccentric, concerned with abstract thought, with "useless" intellectual hobbies. Its most creative products have ranged from Russell, an earl, to Ernest Barker, of working-class parents; but they have shared a patrician sense of not having for their bread and butter to care much what people thought of them. Although this mode admires American energy, method, thoroughness and learning, it is tempted to put up tariff barriers against the mass of scholarly manufactures which threatens to overwhelm the more reflective, literary products of the natives. And a Whitehead or a Richards who leaves Cambridge for the United States is rather shrugged off, as having, in the words of a Cambridge worthy, "come adrift." Except at a technical level, communication between the worlds of English and American scholarship is partial and set with cross-purposes.

So far, I have set up my own models, the Citadel and the Caravan, in an attempt to define basic barriers to a common culture. As good social scientists, we must all have models these days. But they have their dangers, and they are, after all, only similes. And I suspect that you are impatient to explode: "This is a static picture: what of the dynamics?" What, indeed?

What, for example, of the industrial revolution, that great upheaval which made Britain the most dynamic powerhouse the world had ever seen? Looking back from today, it is becoming clear that despite the im-

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mense shifts in physical well-being, styles of life and work, and dominant interests, industrialism has not basically altered the pattern of English culture. It has been assimilated. Richard Cobden and Samuel Smiles did not make Britain a business civilization. So powerful were traditional pulls that Victorian industrialists, like their mercantile predecessors, instinctively sought prestige and status by moving up the social scale and into the Establishment. They bought land, married their daughters into the gentry, sent sons into the professions and Parliament, acquired honours as knights and peers; and their businesses lost energy and thrust. By way of contrast let me quote Professor T.C. Cochran on America:

"It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that in the real, as distinct from the ideal, culture of America from 1830 to 1930, at least, profit-making was the most respected activity. The result was a nation of potential entrepreneurs."[1]

In Britain, on the other hand, the successful businessman tended to disguise his origins "in trade," and to conform to the dominant view that profit-making was ignoble and lacking in prestige. The social roles with the greatest sanctions have been, not economic, but political and professional. The result is that capitalism in Britain has been different in character from capitalism in the United States, less dynamic, more closely connected with the State. Despite the ideology of competition, a "community of interest," with tendencies toward cartels, has been respectable; and it proved a natural step to the public corporation. You will remember that it was Conservative governments which created the pattern of nationalised industries: in London Transport, Imperial Airways, the Central Electricity Board and the British Broadcasting Corporation. The process has now gone so far that the distinction between private and public bureaucracy is shadowy. Business leaders of the younger generation move easily in and out of the public sector, and even *The Economist* can recognise that among businessmen there is a deep-seated "reaction against the whole ethic of Acquisitive Man."

"What, then," you may ask, "of the great English Radical tradition, implacably hostile to the Establishment? Of Dissent, Non-conformity, of Wales and Scotland? What of the labour movement?" And your question would be to the point. These have been the great dynamic forces making for change and growth in British life: and they are the antiphonal theme to that of the Establishment. A century ago, the rising middle and lower-middle classes, predominantly Non-conformist in religion, industrial and commercial in occupation, Cobden's army, were staging a great attack on the Establishment in all its manifestations, economic, political, religious and educational.

[1]Thomas C. Cochran, "Role and Sanction in American Entrepreneurial History," in *Ten Articles on Various Aspects of American History* (n. p., 1943-51), p. 163.

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This attack has the greatest possible relevance to Anglo-American culture. It stemmed from the same tradition which had led to the founding of the northern colonies. English Dissenters also belonged to "gathered communities," hostile to the corporate being of the nation, and their connections with America continued close. English manufacturers were conscious that the business society of the New World shared their aspirations; English artisans were encouraged by the hopes for American democracy; all radicals understood something of the traumatic experience of uprooting; and in their attack on the Establishment they were acutely conscious of American example. They were out to disestablish English institutions, to republicanize the State. And their Tory enemies were not far wrong in accusing them of wanting to Americanize Britain.

But what happened? The Radicals obtained free trade, state education, the opening of the Services to competitive talent, and of the universities to Dissenters, among other benefits. However, they did not succeed in abolishing the Establishment which, as usual, merely made suitable adjustments. And having acquired power in a Liberal Party, wealth from trade and honours from the Crown, they became absorbed into the Establishment. Reform ceased to be iconoclastic, and became paternal. Cobden's Manchester was replaced by Chamberlain's Birmingham, with its experiments in municipal socialism, its publicly-owned utilities and art galleries, the purveyance of plumbing and culture to the people. Joseph Chamberlain himself made his dramatic, but natural, jump from Radical to Conservative, and both major parties vied with each other in wooing the lower-middle-class electorate with further measures of social reform. The climax came between 1906 and 1911, when the famous Liberal administration laid the foundations of the welfare state with unemployment and old age insurance. However, by the time of the first World War, the Liberals, like any aging reform party in office, were faced with the dilemma of carrying on the King's government and acceding to a new round of attacks on the Establishment—in this case independence for Ireland, votes for women and rights for labour, especially the latter. In this event, the Liberals proved incapable of accommodating themselves to the demands of labour, and by the mid-nineteen twenties, had been replaced, as the major reform spokesmen, by a Labour Party.

This historical resumé is significant for Anglo-American relations today. The decline of the Liberal Party, with its Radical, Non-conformist tradition, together with the decline of Non-conformity itself as a religious and social force, was, in fact, the decline of the one great force in English life with truly American cultural affinities. Already, in fact, for a generation, the American star had been waning, as it became clear that the model of a

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republic was irrelevant to the genius of British institutions. And from the 1890's it was the Conservatives, taking their cue from people like Chamberlain who had made most of the United States, both as a potential ally in a threatening international world, and as an example of stable, conservative institutions for an England threatened with further constitutional reforms, including the abolition of that British Senate, the House of Lords.

In the last twenty-five years, those elements in British life which, in my analysis, are in most natural sympathy with the United States have found political expression in the labour movement. The Non-conformist conscience, whether expressed in working-class Methodism, upper-middle-class concern for social justice, or simply in an ingrained resistance to the tyrannies of power, has perhaps been the most powerful force within the Labour Party. But the rhetoric of this new attack on the Establishment has been such that its natural American affinities have been confused and falsified. The new stereotype of the United States as the great capitalist Power has made her seem the enemy of the liberal-minded. In addition, the Non-conformist element has mingled, in the Labour Movement, with other elements which have no American sympathy. There is, of course, continental Marxism; and there is the Christian socialism of the Established Church. But more important is the Fabian strain, intellectual, authoritarian, and Benthamite, the proud inheritance of England's intellectual and administrative aristocracy. The success of the Labour Party has been largely the result of an alliance between the upper-class intelligentsia, connected with the Establishment, and an equally conservative Trades Union Congress. The result has been that, despite the great General Strike of 1926 and the violent class-war propaganda of the depression-ridden 'thirties, the Labour Party has succeeded, without a hint of revolution, in carrying through another radical stage in the transformation of Britain from an aristocratic to a welfare state.

During this last quarter-century, we have witnessed, in fact, yet another dynamic cycle in the life of the Citadel. An attack on the Establishment has succeeded; but in the process, the attackers have been absorbed into the Establishment. Industries have been nationalized, and the national income has been radically redistributed in the form of a far-reaching system of public welfare. But the cake of custom has not been broken. Neither traditional authority, nor its political forms, have been violated, the institutional hierarchy is intact, and although the prosperity of individuals and interests has altered greatly, the pervading social structure remains recognisably the same. We are still an *ancien régime*. Even the landed gentry, whose demise was predicted even a century ago, have survived. Crippling death duties have broken up great estates; and for some aristocratic and county families,

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the price of survival has been to become showmen-curators of country-houses thrown open to the public. But many, true to their genius for adjustment, have converted their estates into limited liability companies, and, with an expert manipulation of income and inheritance tax law, have shared fully in the prosperity of our highly subsidized farming industry.

May I illustrate the persistent shape of British society from two recent controversies, each of which has relevance for Anglo-American culture.

The first is television. The proposal of the last Conservative government to introduce commercial television to compete with the B.B.C.—a sort of New Deal yardstick in reverse— generated fires of controversy which threw into relief, in a most interesting fashion, the basic configuration of British opinion. The advertisers promoted it; but it attracted more respectable support from those who objected on principle to the national monopoly of opinion, those who believed competition would produce livelier controversy, as well as those who hoped it would produce entertainment with a more popular, mass appeal. Its supporters ranged all the way from a Liberal peer like Lord Layton, the Director of the National Gallery and the editor of *Punch,* to the mass-circulation and left-wing *Daily Mirror.* Here and there the supporters voiced pro-American arguments; but the dominant theme was that the taste of the British public would not allow the vulgarities of American TV. The influential supporters of the scheme were, however, a minority and the bill was passed only after considerable modification, and under the pressure of party discipline. Its opponents were equally diverse. Members of the Labour Party, of course, objected that it was an atavistic return to a cruder era of capitalism; but a great number of them, including, for example, Herbert Morrison, joined the *Times,* Lord Halifax, and other spokesmen of the Establishment in bitter opposition to the vulgarization of culture; and the warning of American experience was on everyone's lips. For majority opinion, at most class levels, English culture is still something diffused from above, the prerogative of the intelligentsia; and there is no real feeling that the monopoly of opinion in any way interferes with "the liberties of Englishmen." And so, the B.B.C. still devotes a scarce sound wave-length to a highbrow program with only 200,000 listeners; and the commercial television system, after having been so hedged round with safeguards against the evils of sponsorship as to be permanently in the red, is likely to receive a regular subsidy from the Treasury to permit the mounting of cultural but uneconomic programs. For the mass British public, avid for Liberace, Westerns and giveaway programs, has proved no more discriminating than the American; but instead of being allowed to have what it wants, it is to be subjected to uplift in the interests of national culture. An American institution has been domesticated; but it has suffered that

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characteristic sea-change which ensures that our foggy little, boggy little island shall never, never, never become Americanized.

My second example is education. You will remember that the 1944 Education Act, drafted by a Conservative, put the finishing touches to a ladder from primary school to university designed to recruit for the elite the best talent at whatever class level it is to be found. The Labour Party seems on the whole to have accepted this arrangement, although I shall have more to say on this when I conclude. The confusion of thought involved, however, was well revealed a year or two ago by the comments of a leading Labour politician just returned from his first visit to the United States. He was considerably impressed with the fact that there still appeared to be a greater degree of social democracy in the United States than in the United Kingdom, despite all the efforts of his party. And yet a little later he was complaining about the irresponsibility of the Party's left wing in attacking the Public Schools which, as an old Public School man, he wished to preserve, by socializing them, like the universities. The conflict between the ideal of social equality and an education which, however democratically recruited, is essentially segregated and, to use a horrible piece of shorthand, elitist, was not appreciated.

What, then, are the present prospects for Anglo-American cultural liaison? Our traditional lines of communication across the Atlantic are frayed and broken. The Non-conformist conscience, though still to be reckoned with, works largely through a Labour Party which is anti-American in doctrine and rhetoric. Instead, business elements among the Conservatives stretch their hands across the sea to find support for their nostalgic dreams of free enterprise. But they mistake one dominant manifestation of the American spirit, Capitalism, for the whole, and in my opinion their American affinities are superficial. In any case they are to some extent neutralized by hostility to American competition, business ethics and tariff hypocrisy; and they merge into High Tory opinion whose implacable hostility to everything the United States stands for has been exacerbated by the, for them, humiliating decline in British world power.

However, the outlook is not, perhaps, as bleak as may appear. The social genes which determine the character of English society will prevent its ever approximating that of American democracy; but this does not mean that we shall not continue to evolve; or, as is all too often thought here, that we are suffering from a hardening of the arteries. The vitality, courage and imagination which created the welfare state are still evident; and the heirs of the Radicals, who are largely in the Labour Party, although momentarily nonplussed by the dilemmas which their success has brought them, are seeking ways of releasing new social energies. There are signs

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also, that in this groping after new policies, the Labour Party may be becoming less a doctrinaire, crusading movement, and more a responsible, perhaps The responsible exponent of statecraft. Already, in Ernest Bevin, and Clement Attlee, one may discern the heirs of that Liberal foreign policy which, from Cobden and Gladstone to Grey, tempered power with liberty and a sense of international law. It is no accident of opposition which makes Gaitskell the outspoken opponent of Eden's Suez policy, and the advocate of collaboration with the Commonwealth, the United States and the United Nations. The idea of an Atlantic community may have more to hope from a Labour than from a Conservative government.

There are also signs to be seen on the domestic front. The country is faced with two related problems: how to create economic enterprise in a welfare state, and how to achieve further measures of social justice without shattering the integrity of English institutions and sabotaging the economy. These problems are intimately related and in a way which is significant for Anglo-American culture.

The economic problem is partly one of management. However, if the listlessness of businessmen is partly due to high taxation, it is also due to the intractability of labour over schemes for more efficient production and marketing. It is becoming clear that this problem cannot be solved by exhorting or threatening the working force to discipline itself; nor by tinkering with incentive schemes. Only when the working classes themselves respond to opportunity with the liveliness and vigour which most recognize to be the characteristic of the American labour force will our economy be put on a sound basis. A growing number of people, especially those with American experience, are coming to the conclusion that the real stumbling block to this lies in the rigidities of the class structure. For, despite nationalised industries and social welfare, the English working classes are still inhibited by class inferiority, which limits the range of imagination, ambition and responsibility. On this view, then, the key to economic progress is bound up with a greater measure of social opportunity. This does not mean pandering to ingrained bitterness by another round of expropriation; but something more deep-seated: a radical change in our system of education.

In a recent book, Anthony Crosland, one of the younger intellectuals in the Labour Party, has been arguing that a career open to talent is not enough, and that a more broadly based education is essential to our survival. This is already recognised as necessary in the field of technical education; but this argument insists that it be extended to general education in the form of comprehensive high schools for all, which would serve an egalitarian purpose equivalent to that of the American high school.

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The proposal is interesting on two counts. Firstly, it appears to reflect a growing body of labour opinion. The Bevanite wing have always advocated it, even to the extent of doing away altogether with the Public Schools; and its advocacy by one of the Party's middle-class intellectuals is a sign that it may become official policy. Secondly, it shows a readiness to learn from American experience, which is interestingly new. In the field of education as well, perhaps, as in that of trade union policy, it may be that in the future American experience may prove relevant to our predicament, and the anti-American bias of our Labour reformers may be replaced by a more candid appraisal of American institutions. It is worth emphasising, that when Aneurin Bevan claims he is not anti-American, he is sincere. His Welsh Methodist instincts respond to the egalitarian, as opposed to the capitalistic, elements in American life.

It may be, therefore, that we shall see the Labour Party carrying through another attack on the Establishment which, this time, may have American overtones, and may help to shift the balance among English reformers away from continental, and toward Atlantic, culture. You may be sure that England will not become Americanized in the process. The Citadel and the Caravan will continue to symbolize a polarization of culture. But together they may constitute a more complementary relationship which could be of great power in Atlantic affairs. The extent to which these tendencies become articulate depends, to some extent, on the kind of image the United States presents to the world.

Afternote

This article was originally delivered as an after-dinner paper to a group of American scholars in Philadelphia in the fall of 1956. It has all the marks of an occasional piece with topical references which date it to the month of Suez. Yet it is not completely dated. Despite the presence here and there of an historian's erroneous judgment about contemporary events, for example my total failure to envisage the success of commercial television in Britain, it contains enough that is relevant to the underlying relationship between Britain and America to justify the editors in asking for it to be reprinted.

Frank Thistlethwaite, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of East Anglia, Norwich, England, has served as a Visiting Professor of American Civilization in the University of Pennsylvania and Chairman of the British Association for American Studies. [This article appeared in Vol. IX, No. 1 (Spring, 1957).]

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Charles E. Shain

The English Novelists and the American Civil War

ON JUNE 10, 1861, A LITTLE MORE THAN A MONTH AFTER THE NEWS OF THE outbreak of the American Civil War had reached England, Mrs. Gaskell, the Manchester novelist, wrote a pressing letter to her young American friend Charles Eliot Norton in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She wanted him to explain to her what the war was about.

> We talked over your politics and could *not* understand them [she began] and I half determined to do what I am doing now—take myself and Meta for average specimens of English people—*most kindly* disposed to you, our dear cousins, hating slavery intensely, yet thoroughly *puzzled by* what is now going on in America. I don't mind your thinking me dense or ignorant, and I think I can be sure that you will give me a quiet, unmetaphorical statement of what is in the end proposed in this war. Now don't be indignant at me (or at the English) when I tell you exactly how much I (average English) know, and how much I don't know. I understood "the Union" to be an *expansive* or *contractive* contract. Expansive (as being capable of including more than the original thirteen states) it has proved itself to be. But it seems to me that the very fact of its power of expansion involved that of its *dis*solution. No over great empire has long preserved itself in vigour. You included (by your annexations) people of different breeds, and consequently different opinions and habits of thoughts; the time was sure to come when you could not act together as a nation; the only wonder to me is that you cohered so long. . . . We have a proverbial expression in Lancashire "Good riddance to bad rubbish" that I think I should have applied to the Southern secessions.

Such a staunch Northerner as Norton must have been discouraged as he read these confused English assumptions about the United States and the integrity of the Union. If Mrs. Gaskell did not understand the issues

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of the Civil War any more clearly than this, how could even a yearning Boston Anglophile find any hope in English intelligence and sympathy. The Gaskells were just the sort of English people Norton's New England was counting on. They were Unitarians from Bright and Cobden's Lancashire, a county that the South of England scornfully called "America and water." And Mrs. Gaskell had first met Norton and other cultivated Americans in the congenial Anglo-American atmosphere of Florence and Rome. Norton did what he could. Long, patient letters explaining the sacredness of the Union and the righteousness of the Northern cause were sent to Manchester, and soon the Gaskell family became convinced supporters of the North.

But this was just one family. How could eloquence like Norton's hope to reach all those other influential English people the Gaskell family stood for, those who must understand why the defence of the Union, not the emancipation of the slaves was the battle cry of the North? For the next four years ignorance of the Northern cause and the indifference of literary and intellectual England toward the Civil War was going to prove bitterly disappointing to many Northerners, especially in New England. The great irony of the Anglo-American situation, Oliver Wendell Holmes said in a public lecture in 1863 and an *Atlantic* article, was that never had England and the United States been joined together so closely by literary communication as just before the war. "We reprinted each other's books, we made new reputations for each other's authors, we wrote in each other's magazines, and introduced each other's young writers to our own several publics. Thought echoed to thought, voice answered to voice across the Atlantic." And now, he went on, where are the English writers when we need them?

> Where is the English Church in this momentous struggle? . . . Where is Lord Brougham, ex-apostle of the Diffusion of knowledge . . . ? Where is Dickens, the hater of the lesser wrongs of Chancery Courts, the scourge of tyrannical beadles and heartless schoolmasters? . . . Where is the Laureate, so full of fine indignations and high aspirations? Where is the London "Times". . . . Where is the little hunchback's journal . . .? ["Our Progressive Independence" (April 1864), 508–09.]

Across the ocean, just after the war, a young English intellectual, Leslie Stephen, expressed his complete disagreement with Holmes' premises. He thought that sheer British ignorance of America was the cause of all the wrong-headedness literary New England complained of. Most Englishmen, Stephen wrote, were "as ignorant of American history since the revolution as of the history of the Chinese empire, and of

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American geography as of the geography of central Africa. . . . The name of America . . . called up to the ordinary English mind nothing but a vague cluster of associations compounded of Mrs. Trollope, *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." Stephen, as he wrote this, was in the process of denouncing the misinformation about America supplied by the *Times* to its influential readers, including Mrs. Gaskell. During the war, Stephen had been such an ardent "Northerner" that he had absented himself from his Cambridge fellowship for a summer trip to America to make himself better informed about the progress of the cause. He wrote back to his mother from Boston in 1863 that he was having an awkward time talking to his new American friends.

> There is still a good deal to be explained about the state of English opinion which is hard to put plainly to them. I really don't know how to translate into civil language what I have heard a thousand times over in England; that both sides are such a set of snobs and blackguards that we only wish they could both be licked, or that their armies are the scum of the earth and the war got up by contractors, or that the race is altogether degenerate and demoralized, and it's pleasant to see such a set of bullies have a fall. I really can't tell them all these little compliments, which I have heard in private conversation word for word, and which are a free translation of *Times* and *Saturday Review*, even if I introduce them with the apology (though it is really a genuine apology) that we know nothing at all about them.

The genuineness of Stephen's apology might not have been so impressive to his American friends as its irony. For if England knew nothing about America, how could it damn both the Union and the war so irrationally and irretrievably?

The answer was that the impact of the beginning of the Civil War only seemed to confirm all previous British impressions of America. The confusion of issues, the strident, conflicting voices from Washington, New York, Charleston and Boston, newspaper dispatches that described mob violence in the cities and mob armies in the field, these were exactly of a pattern with the vision of America Dickens had written into *Martin Chuzzlewit*. During young Henry Adams' first autumn in the American Ministry in London he was as much sickened with anxiety by the distressing news from America as he was by the perfidy of British politics. He wrote to his brother in America in October 1861,

> You know how much encouragement we have had from your side. Every post has taken away on one hand what it has brought of good on the other. It has by regular steps sapped the foundation of all confidence in us, in our institutions, our rulers and our honor. How do you

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> suppose we can overcome the effects of the New York Press? How do you suppose we can conciliate men whom our tariff is ruining? How do you suppose we can shut people's eyes to the incompetence of Lincoln or the disgusting behavior of many of our volunteers and officers?

In the first two years of the Civil War America reached the nadir of its reputation in Britain.

Most of the British feelings of distaste for the Americans that the conflict ripened had been maturing for a long time. The anti-Americanism most vehemently expressed was the old Tory complex of fear and contempt. But its expression now seemed to come from all sections of educated opinion except from those few English radicals who remained firm in their American faith. Before the war the Prime Minister's wife could afford to be amused by the prospect of the growing commercial prosperity of the United States. Lady Palmerston wrote to Monckton Milnes in 1858, "I think we are fast verging into Democracy and Americanism. Sir Hamilton Seymour teaches his children to speak through their noses, as this is what he thinks they all must come to." Before the war it had been the Manchester School of economists who had circulated the warnings that the economic and industrial superiority of America to England was "as certain as the next eclipse." Once the war had begun to be debated in Parliament, however, the Tories borrowed this argument from its begetters and used it to recommend the recognition of the Confederacy. Lord Robert Cecil pointed out to the House in March 1862 that England and the Northern states could never in any case have been friends.

> not merely because the newspapers wrote at each other, or that there were prejudices on both sides, but because we were rivals, rivals politically and rivals commercially. We aspired to the same position. We aspired to the government of the seas. We were both manufacturing people, and at every port, as well as at every court, we were rivals to each other. . . . With respect to the Southern States the case was entirely reversed.

In September 1861 Bulwer-Lytton made a more elaborate analysis of the threat from America for the enlightenment of the country squires gathered at the Herts. Agricultural Society:

> If it could have been possible, that, as population and wealth increased, all the vast continent of America, with her mighty seaboard and the fleets which her increasing ambition as well as her extending commerce would have formed and armed, could have remained under one form of government, in which an executive has little or no control over a

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> populace exceedingly adventurous and excitable, why then America would have hung over Europe like a gathering and destructive thundercloud. . . . But in proportion as America shall become subdivided into different states, each of which is large enough for greatness—larger than any European kingdom—her ambition will be less formidable to the rest of the world, and I do not doubt that the action of emulation and rivalry between one free state and another . . . will produce the same effects upon art and commerce, and the improvements in practical government, which the same kind of competition produced in the old commonwealths of Greece.

The news of Lee's surrender was to come as a terrible shock to Bulwer. He said to an American diplomat in Paris, "Well I must tell you frankly, Mr. Bigelow, I am sorry for it. I had indulged the hope that your country might break up into two or more fragments. I regard the United States as a menace to the whole civilized world if you are allowed to go on developing as you have been, undisturbed." Bulwer's fears were not based only on trade statistics and merchant navy comparisons. The spectacle of a huge rival Anglo-Saxon population unled and unleavened by any county families frightened him more deeply .

But members of Lord Derby's and Disraeli's Conservative Party were not the only politicians to hope for a Balkanized America. It was a Liberal M.P., Roebuck, who in 1863 introduced the motion to recognize the Confederacy. An important theme of his speech was that "the great bully of the world" should be made ineffective by having half his strength cut away. It is difficult, in fact, in reading the history of the Parliamentary reaction to the Civil War to discover the point where pro-Confederate sympathy begins and anti-Northern sentiment ends. The governing Liberal Party and its leaders were more confused than the better disciplined Conservatives about whether it was easier to love the South and its Simon Legrees or hate the North with its Hannibal Chollops and Jefferson Bricks.

If we turn from the conservatives in both political parties to two "liberal" thinkers, Walter Bagehot and Matthew Arnold, we might expect to find less doctrinaire minds at work on the American problem, but for each of them the coming of the Civil War provoked transatlantic thoughts as dark as Bulwer's. Early in the war Bagehot published under a pseudonym a study of the American Constitution in the *National Review*. Much to the disappointment of Gladstone, to whom he sent a copy, Bagehot did not conclude that the Constitution had implied the power of secession to the Southern states. For the rest, however, he seemed to be outlining the ideas which Gladstone and many

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others in the country's Liberal majority were to work from during the war. To Bagehot the Americans were England's "nearest national kindred and our most important trading connexions," but the seat of the trouble in American society and government was that nowhere could be found authority, nowhere was reflected the strong love of order that was the glory of the British people and their institutions. His essay states strongly a British view most often repeated by leading public men during the course of the war, that disunion was inevitable because of the fundamental contrasts between North and South in "characters, ideas and habits"; that the Union could never be restored because no "free state can rule an unwilling dependency of a large size." Then, quite gratuitously for the purposes of his analysis, Bagehot went on:

> To this gradual corruption of American democracy [the extension of universal suffrage] it is principally owing that Europe at large, and England especially, have not grieved much at the close proximity of its probable fall, but perhaps rejoiced at the prospect of some marked change from a policy which was so inconvenient to its neighbors, which must be attended to because its range was so wide, and the physical force under its direction was so large, but of which the events were mean, the actors base and the working inexplicable. A low vulgarity, undefinable but undeniable has deeply displeased the cultivated mind of Europe; and the American union will fall, if it does fall, little regretted, even by those whose race is akin, whose language is identical, whose weightiest opinions are on most subjects the same as theirs. The unpleasantness of mob government has never before been exemplified so conspiciously, for it never before has worked upon so large a scene.

To the charges of these chiefly politically-minded thinkers Matthew Arnold added the warnings of an English intellectual concerned about forces tending toward division and disintegration in English society. For him there was a lesson in the American war for the unity of British national life. In 1861 in one of his earliest descriptions of the cultural situation of England he found it useful to employ the new word "Americanized"—"a short and significant expression which everyone understands." The danger of America may be England's: "the multitude in power with no ideal to elevate or guide it, the spirit of the nation vulgarized; unity imperilled because there is no institution grand enough to unite around." America's fault, he said, was national self-conceit. The American forgets that it is indispensable "to have before his eyes objects which suggest heights of grandeur, or intellect, or feeling, or refinement. . . . Neither in Church or in State have they had the spectacle of any

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august institution before their eyes. The face of the land is covered with a swarm of sects. . . . They have no aristocracy. . . . The occasional contact with real superiority finds the American half credulous, half resentful." The whole country affords "the spectacle of a people which threatens to lose its power of intellectual and moral growth." And in a footnote Arnold added, "The above was written at the beginning of last year, when the important events now agitating the American States had not yet occurred."

The tone of self-satisfaction or the full-struck note of omniscience that sounded through the voices of Bulwer, Bagehot and Arnold results from the confidence they felt in 1861 that they were summing up the dominant English opinion of the American people over the last thirty years. Whether, as Leslie Stephen suggested, the notions of America had come from Mrs. Trollope or Dickens, or from Tocqueville, whether they were conceptions born of reading the travelers and novelists, or preconceptions born of fears for English cultural stability or the rule of the English gentlemen, they were the most widely expressed judgments of America as the Civil War started. They were endlessly repeated by that most influential weekly, the *Saturday Review*, and powerfully expressed by the *Times* in the hands of a management that was close to Palmerston and almost obsessively fixed to a distrust of democracy.

Out of this general disillusionment with American affairs, North and South, soon grew two British attitudes contemptuous of the Northern cause. Each was influential in attracting English feeling once the war had started and each furnished themes for English war novels. The first was the general assumption, inherited from the prewar years but getting stronger every day, that slavery had nothing to do with the war. The second, in part dependent upon the first, was that the South was an oppressed agrarian aristocracy fighting for its liberty, or, as the *Times* put it in a leader for July 5, 1861, it was the only half of the country which could celebrate Independence Day with unconfused feelings.

During the first eighteen months of the war the mass of English opinion on the sincerity of Northerners toward the emancipation of the slaves wavered between cynicism and indifference. The British national slavery conscience, the Anti-slavery Society, might have aroused the nation's interest as they had in 1833, but they were just as disappointed in Lincoln and the war aims of the Republican Party as the American abolitionists were. Ever since the Compromise of 1850 and the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law the English abolitionists saw no hope in any section of the American people for a just war against slavery. In an abolitionist meeting in London in 1851 a resolution had declared that

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the Northern states were as deeply implicated in the guilt of slavery as the South. For, if the North with a population seven million greater than the South and 152 representatives in Congress to the South's 81 wanted to end slavery by a majority vote, it had the power to do so. These facts and "truths" had guided British opinion for the past ten years. No action of Lincoln's government until the announcement of the intended Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862 could lift the moral tone of the Northern cause, even for many of those Nonconformist and working-class British who were closest in feeling to the North. When, after January 1, 1863, the Proclamation was not followed by any bloody slave insurrections behind the Southern lines, the North's battle in England for public opinion began to be won. The decision on the slavery issue, it seems now, was critical for turning the great bulk of British opinion from disillusion with the American war to belief in it. In the summer of 1863 Jefferson Davis ordered his emissary James M. Mason to consider his mission in London at an end, and at the same time he expelled the British consuls from the Confederacy.

Pro-Northern British feeling influenced by the slavery issue seems to have been chiefly in the working class, the congregations of the "free" churches and other miscellaneous sections of the British people, hard to locate and identify except perhaps in Mrs. Gaskell's phrase, those "most kindly disposed to you, our dear cousins." But these same people might intermittently share another popular wartime sentiment, admiration for the "brave little Confederacy." Many degrees of admiration were possible. Monckton Milnes, whom Henry Adams called "one of the warmest Americans in the world" and whom he and his father counted on for support in Parliament and in fashionable society, can represent a feeling of reluctant respect for the Confederacy dictated by a choice between shabby alternatives. In Parliament he spoke in a way completely satisfactory to the Adams family, but in private he wrote to a friend, "For my part I see no gleam of good in anything American; the lower civilization, as represented by the South, is so much braver & cunninger & daringer than the cultivated shopkeepers of the North—it is just as if the younger sons of the Irish and Scotch nobility were turned loose against the bourgeois of Leeds." Milnes was using his own version of the favorite English analogy for the American war, a historical parallel that was so pervasive in English thinking about the Civil War that it cannot be separated from any English view of the Southern cause.

The analogy involved many colorful resemblances between the English and American civil wars. It could become quite elaborate. The South were of course the Cavaliers. Its first families were descended from

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English families through emigrated younger sons, some of them having fled the country after the Royalist defeat at Worcester, James M. Mason's family, for instance. They had kept their true patrician inheritance unsullied—except, of course, for blows suffered to such institutions as primogeniture, entail and the established church under the attack of that demagogue, the un-Virginian Jefferson—until now in the nineteenth century they made up an agrarian aristocracy as pure and perhaps luckier economically than the tradition they derived from. They were England's natural allies and friends. In the words of a pro-Confederate M.P. to Parliament, "There still remain among them the ancestral and hereditary recollections of England." The North, it followed, were originally Cromwell's Roundheads, now mixed with other races, especially the German and Irish peasantries. The New England Puritans had been the first antimonarchical forces in England, and now their descendants were fighting for principles so antithetical to the code of the gentleman as universal suffrage, commercial contracts, tradesmen's values.

To trace the origin and growth of this historical parallel is not difficult in the case of the North. Since early in the century the North and its western extension the Frontier had furnished English travelers and novelists with all the evidence of American commercialism and peasant vulgarity. When Lincoln was placed by his English visitors as the Consummate Yankee ("I never saw such a specimen of Yankee in my life," Lord Hartington wrote home to his father the Duke of Devonshire) we can assume that he took on many of the distasteful associations of Sam Slick. The image of the aristocratic South was a more recent phenomenon and needed the war to bring it into full bloom.

One anti-democratic Englishman who knew America well had found the major tenets of the Southern faith well established in South Carolina in 1835. G. W. Featherstonhaugh, a geologist, reported in his travel book a conversation with a group of early Southern nationalists in Columbia. It was quite new to him, he wrote, though he had known America since 1806, "to hear men of the better class express themselves openly against a republican government, and to listen to discussions of great ability, the object of which was to show that there can never be a good government if it is not administered by gentlemen." He told his English readers that the leading planters of South Carolina were the gentlemen of America, that they looked down upon "the trading communities of the Northern States, where slavery does not exist, with that habitual sense of superiority which men born to command . . . always cherish when they are placed in competition with men engaged in mercantile pursuits." But before the war English writers of fiction had preferred Virginia to South Carolina as the

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fictional home of a separate American gentry. In the late fifties Thackeray's novel, *The Virginians*, had helped to fortify the tradition.

The international theme of *The Virginians* was the American War of Independence seen as an unfortunate quarrel between brothers, with a happy transatlantic reconciliation at the end. But whenever possible, despite the awkward fact of Virginia's contribution to the rebellion and Thackeray's aggrandizement of Washington, the novelist's emphasis fell on the loyalty to England of Virginia and her traditions. The young Virginian gentleman, Harry Warrington, comes to England and beats a picked group of aristocrats at their own games and courtesies chiefly because he has grown up in a healthier patrician culture than mid-eighteenth-century England could provide. Thackeray's Virginia was "a loyal colony. The Virginians boasted that King Charles II had been king in Virginia before he had been king in England. English king and English Church were alike faithfully honored there. The resident gentry were allied to good English families. They held their heads above the Dutch traders of New York and the money-getting Roundheads of Pennsylvania and New England."

If English novelists helped to acquaint the English mind with the Southern tradition, they were even more influential in the South itself. The phenomenal popularity of Sir Walter Scott, G.P.R. James, Bulwer and Disraeli in the South, especially in the decade before the war, has been studied as one of the sources of Southern nationalism, and Mark Twain's statement that Sir Walter Scott gave the South the image of itself that it was prepared to die for has taken on a new credence. The cult of chivalry, the code of the duel, the revival of Cavalier manners and martial traditions in the new military colleges were doubtless both cause and effect of the "Waverley" tastes of the prosperous, "separatist" South. To what extent Southerners could make these tastes known to kindred spirits in England before the war is hard to discern. But a newly arrived Englishman could be indoctrinated with them very quickly, according to the *Times* correspondent William Howard "Bull Run" Russell. In his first meeting with the Southern Commissioners in Washington in the spring of 1861 they told him that "trade, commerce, the pursuit of gain, manufacture, and the base mechanical arts, had so degraded the whole race of Northerners they would never attempt to strike a blow in fair fight for what they prized so highly in words. . . ." When the Commissioners went on to remind him of the Cavalier descent and spirit of the South, Russell felt impelled to remind them that the best gentry in England had been "worsted at last by the train-bands of London and the rabbledom of Cromwell's Independents." The English officers who crossed the Atlantic

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to join the Confederate army arrived in the South fully indoctrinated in the glorious cause. One group of them who successfully ran the blockade proclaimed their mission to the citizenry of Wilmington, North Carolina, in these words, "We come, not as mercenary adventurers, to enlist under the banner of the Confederacy, but, like true knights errant, to join as honorable volunteers the standards of the bravest lance in Christendom, that of the noble, peerless Lee."

Late in his life Henry Adams summed up his observations of the strong British attraction for the Southern cause in the sixties, and he wrote an essay on eccentricity as the strongest quality of the English mind and "the chief charm of English society as well as the chief terror." He describes, in effect, what other American observers, Emerson for instance, had established as an American's sharpest impression of the mid-nineteenth-century English scene, the sight of the British gentleman retreating into colorful ways of life and thought which he hoped would distinguish or establish his patrician descent and continue a tradition of social respectability in great danger of its life from the democratic mob. Adams called upon the novels of Thackeray and Dickens, the essays of Arnold and Gladstone's instant recognition of Sothern's portrait of Lord Dundreary to substantiate his impression that eccentrics filled the English scene. And he noted that in the 1860s England was a comparatively quiet, unagitated country, full of political and institutional contradictions which allowed public eccentricity to flourish.

> By natural affinity the social eccentrics commonly sympathized with political eccentricity. The English mind took naturally to rebellion—when foreign—and it felt particular confidence in the Southern Confederacy because of its combined attributes—foreign rebellion of English blood—which came closer to ideal eccentricity than could be reached by Poles, Hungarians, Italians or Frenchmen. All the English eccentrics rushed into the ranks of the rebel sympathizers. . . .

Henry Adams' eccentrics were strikingly present among the English novelists who chose the Civil War for a subject. The most colorful of the group, George Alfred Lawrence, tried to rush bodily into the ranks of the South. Lawrence had created a hero and a hero-cult with his extremely popular novel *Guy Livingstone* in 1857. His hero was a Victorian version of Byron's dark and passionate Englishman, a hard-riding and hard-living Guards officer, a gambler, a duellist and a heartbreaker. The cult founded on the novel was called "muscular blackguardism" by unfriendly critics, but today the pose struck by Lawrence' hero seems more Victorian than Byronic. He is too sentimentally world-weary and too respectably anti-bourgeois. In American affairs his type was sure to be

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anti-Northern, and when the war came Lawrence, acting out his hero's role, leapt upon a Cunarder to join the crusade against the North. He described the war in these terms:

> On one side is ranged an innumerable multitude—which can hardly be looked upon as a distinct nation for in it mingles all the blood of Western Europe—doggedly determined, perhaps, to persevere in its purpose, yet strangely apathetic when a crisis seems really imminent—easily discouraged by reverses and easily prone to discontent and distrust of all ruling powers—divided by political jealousies, often more bitter than the hatred of the commonwealth foe—mingling always with their patriotism a certain commercial calculation, that, if all the tales are true, makes them from the highest to the lowest, peculiarly open to the temptations of the Almighty Dollar; these men are fighting for a positive gain; for a reacquisition of a vast territory, that if they win they must watch, as Russia has watched Poland. On the other side I see a real nation, numerically small, in whose veins the Anglo-Saxon blood flows almost untainted; I see rich men casting down their gold, and strong men casting down their lives, as if both were dross, in the cause they have sworn to win. I see Sybarites enduring hardships that *un vieux de la vielle* would have grumbled at; I hear gentle and tender women echo in simple earnestness the words that were once spoken to me by a fair Southern wife—"I pray that Philip may die in the front, and that they may burn me in the plantation, before the Confederacy makes peace on any terms but our own." I see that reverses, instead of making these people cashier their generals, or cavil at the rules, only intensify their fierce energy of resistance. These men are fighting—not to gain a foot of ground, but simply to hold their own, with the liberty they conceive to be their birthright.

The literary result of Lawrence' American adventure was not a novel, but it can fairly be called fiction manqué. In *Border and Bastille,* published in 1863, he describes his unsuccessful attempts to join the Southern forces and his months of imprisonment in Washington after the Federals had captured him. The only South that Lawrence found was in Baltimore where, between forays at the border, he whiled away his days as an honorary member of the Maryland Club with billiards, fast trotters and duck shooting on the Chesapeake. His capture in western Maryland was ignominious. The three local farmers who intercepted him did not, he complains, use the regular formulas of challenge. When his captors "indulge in a rough jocularity" at his expense, he replies with appropriate hauteur. "I had not escaped from London chaff and Parisian persiflage to be mocked by a wild Virginian." After eight weeks in a Washington prison Lawrence was released on his parole, visited Niagara Falls and

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went back to England to write in the last pages of his story that the Union would never be recovered: ". . . not for the first time in history has an aristocracy grown up in the centre of a democracy; . . . The New Englander sees this just as plainly as the Virginian, and both have equal pride in thinking that Cavalier and Roundhead are fighting the old battle once more."

Though Lawrence continued to write novels until 1876 he never used his Civil War experiences in his later fiction. He must have discovered soon after his return that another novelist had beaten him to his own story, for the character that Lawrence had invented in *Guy Livingstone* and tried to live in *Border and Bastille* had been taken up by a spectacular new novelist who called herself Ouida and was just beginning to shock and delight all England, "from peers to pantry maids" as the phrase went. In a pair of novelettes published about this time she sent two heroes of the Lawrence stripe to serve the Confederacy with conspicuously greater success than he had managed to achieve.

Ouida's two Southern war stories are really the same tale written twice. In each case a disgraced Guards officer seeks oblivion in the Confederate Army and finds redemption instead. In *Deadly Dash* the hero of that name, "a sort of compound of Monte Cristo, Mephistopheles and Murat mixed in one," as Ouida calls him, must send in his commission and emigrate to the American war after he kills one Russian prince too many in the Bois de Vincennes in a quarrel that concerned a "wretched little chorus-singer of the Café Alcazar." Some time later a holidaying fellow Guardsman, who has run the blockade and "pushed at once into the heart of Virginia, to be in the full heat of whatever should come in the cards," rides into a skirmish where "a handful of Southern troopers held their own with tremendous difficulty against three divisions of Federal infantry." Although the visitor is legally neutral—"delicate Anglo-euphemism for coward"—he rides into the battle and fights beside the superb cavalry leader who is, of course, Deadly Dash. It is "a hot thing," "the pace is so splendidly fast," and with a gallant charge and a rebel yell they flee through the surrounding infantry, Deadly Dash turning in his saddle at the last minute to bring down the Union general. But a second Northern force of two thousand troopers overpowers the little band and they are captured. A strange lottery follows. The two Englishmen draw slips that send them back to Virginia in exchange for Northern prisoners, but Major Stuart Lane, a native Virginian, draws a death slip. Now, even in the Confederate South Dash has not changed his preference for married women. He has tried to tempt Major Lane's wife, but she has spurned him. Purified somehow by this unique reversal, Deadly

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Dash changes places with the Virginian and dies before a Union firing squad.

In *Redeemed, An Episode with the Confederate Horse* Bertie Winton leaves for "Secessia" under a cloud similar to Dash's. In disgrace with his father and the regiment for his too frequent appearances in divorce cases, duels and gambling "hells," he too is discovered with a small band of cavalry in a Virginia setting where, we are told in Ouida's splendid prose, "the rice grew but the richer and faster because it was sown in soil where slaughtered thousands rotted, unsepulchered and unrecorded." Bertie, in his turn, saves Jeb Stuart's cavalry by creeping through the Federal pickets to blow up their fortifications. "Tarnation cheeky thing to do," says the Northern general as he tosses down a gin sling. But Bertie's apotheosis is yet to come. Fighting for the South has made over this listless man-about-town into a bold cavalry leader, ". . . no man was better known or better trusted in all Lee's divisions." On a famous day in the Shenandoah Valley General Longstreet orders Colonel Winton's squadrons to "break the enemy's square on the left," and Bertie "bowing with the old Pall Mall grace, turned and gave the word to advance." He breaks the square but is almost killed in the attempt. His father, Lord Winton, is, unaccountably, a spectator of the battle from the Federal side and he rides to rescue his forgiven son.

Few stories of any war can compare with Ouida's in their striking combination of gore and nonchalance. Her exiled English gentlemen conduct themselves as if they were killing blue-coated grouse instead of Union soldiers, and the enemy dead pile up around them as if the Federals made a deliberate strategy out of dying in heaps. The character of the opposing forces is always indicated by the contrasting figures of dashing cavalrymen and thick lines of foot soldiers hiding behind breastworks. The struggle is obviously between two ways of life, and the historical analogy with the English civil wars is always in the foreground.

A like-minded but slightly less respectable novelist than Lawrence or Ouida fictionalized the war in a series of "yellowbacks" which tried to be as timely in their appearance as the news dispatches from America. In a series of five novels William Stephens Hayward made a spectacular attempt to bring a durable cast of English characters through four years of the war. When, as he was writing the last two volumes, military events overtook his pro-Southern plots and prophecies he learned to roll with the wave of history and face the facts of Southern defeat with composure.

Hayward's first novel, *Hunted to Death,* barely gets his hero, an English adventurer named Captain George, on the American scene and indoctrinated with a passion against the North. He cleans out several New

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York gambling houses and marries a Creole beauty in New Orleans. In the next novel, *The Black Angel,* he is in the Confederate Army in Virginia and assists General Beauregard at Fort Sumter and Charleston. The third novel, *The Star of the South,* finds Captain George leading a cavalry squadron, the Carolina Crashers, at Bull Run. The carnage of the battle is lingered over and, as is customary in these English novels of the war, the Southern cavalry charge is described in English hunting terms.

> There was a fierce excitement in this which chimed in well with George's present humor. To see them double and twist like hunted hares—gasping, panting till at last the inevitable time came, and, rising in his stirrups, the sabre would whistle through the air, gleam in the sunshine, and the next instant the running form would be a dark spot on the plain.

The Northern officers at Bull Run are epitomized in a Massachusetts lawyer who sits his horse like a sack. To prove the motives of the opposing armies and account for the difference in their military prowess, the Fugitive Slave Law is remembered as "the curse and eternal disgrace of the hypocritical, dollar-worshipping Yankees . . . by which the tricking Northerners bound themselves to the system of slavery."

The Star of the South was written at the high point of Hayward's hopes for Confederate success. The next novel, *The Fiery Cross,* although it celebrates the Southern "victory" at Shiloh, begins to rationalize the difficulties of the Southern position. The Fiery Cross, an order like the Ku Klux Klan, is formed in Louisiana to combat slave revolts and to answer Northern emancipation propaganda. Hayward grants that slavery is in itself a great evil but he wants to exhibit the bloody havoc that will result when the Negroes, so dependent on their masters, are turned loose. And it ill becomes the English, he says, echoing Carlyle, to put up a "hypocritical whine" at the wickedness and inhumanity across the Atlantic while they have industrial slaves and paupers surrounding them at home. The novelist does admit that the

> haughty Southerner brave and chivalric to a fault and withal insolent from their long wielding absolute power, refused to read the signs of the times. Slavery and States Rights! Had they blotted out the former, the latter must certainly win their independence against all the might of mongrel Yankeeland, whose armies were made up principally of German and Irish mercenaries.

After Shiloh Hayward's characters return to New Orleans just before Farragut's capture of the city. "Beast" Butler enters the novel and a new heroine, Lola the quadroon, is brought before him to be insulted. His

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heroes act out some of the actual events that followed the surrender of the city and then retreat by water to continue Hayward's war in the last novel *The Rebel Privateer*. This volume was written after the war when some of the novelist's sentiments had been revised. The Yankees are no longer cowards, that is, the "pure born Americans—not the questionable hordes who throng that country, the prodigals of Europe." But his bitterness against English neutrality still holds. Some day, Hayward predicts, England may turn faint and exhausted for aid and she will be met with the cynical doctrine of non-intervention, which to English statesmen means never fight equals, intervene only when there is a profit to be made. The last piece of Civil War history that Hayward fictionalizes is Lincoln's assassination. His hero enters Washington in disguise, meets Wilkes Booth and prepares a plot for the abduction, but not the murder, of Lincoln. But the President, who in the novel talks and jokes like an English stage Yankee, craftily sends an old rail-splitting friend disguised as himself to the rendezvous and vastly enjoys his joke. The Englishman and his Southern friends are dissuaded from going any further with the plot by the quadroon beauty, who is now a famous actress. A few days later she is present watching *Our American Cousin* from the wings of Ford's Theater when Booth shoots. Our final sight of Hayward's heroes finds them watching the last Southern privateer sink. But they will not admit defeat. "It may not be this year or the next, not for many years; but ultimately the South shall achieve independence. We may sink now like our gallant ship; but as the waves close over us, our motto shall be *Resurgam*."

This fervent loyalty shown by the "best sort" in England for the brave little Confederacy kept its vitality in one tradition of the English novel for the next twenty-five years. For a novelist's purpose Southern defeat had, perhaps, advantages. An unlimited supply of tragedy and pathos was made available for an indefinite number of stories and, beyond this, a novelist could play with the resemblances between the loss of the tradition of the gentleman in America and his unstable fortunes at home. The reading public for romantic and "fashionable" novels had become larger than ever in the sixties. The embattled and defeated Confederacy became a convenient recent background against which to place the brooding English aristocrat always ready to fight to retain his imperiled heritage against his natural enemies, the mob of democrats and boors.

Disraeli in his most pretentious and flamboyant novel, *Lothair*, uses elements of this Anglo-American situation, although the defeated South is only a small part of the novel's complications. *Lothair*, which was published in 1870, arranges a gaudy collection of aristocrats in a tapestry-like

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plot, and where the novelist's announced satire begins and the attitude of adoration ends has puzzled many readers, including Anthony Trollope, who thought it was the most snobbish book he had ever read. With one of his golden figures, Colonel Campion, Disraeli introduced into fiction the Confederate exile in Europe. He is an exotic mixture, a rich man who fights on the barricades with Garibaldi, collects contemporary art and is married to the mysterious Theodora, the high priestess of a natural religion and the inspiration of all the revolutionary movements in Europe. The Colonel is, as Disraeli's duke says of him, a gentleman,

> not a Yankee. People make the greatest mistake about these things. He is a gentleman of the South; they have no property but land; and I am told his territory was immense. He always lived in Paris and in the highest style, disgusted of course with his own country. It is not unlikely he may have lost his estates now; but that makes no difference to me. I shall treat him and all Southern gentlemen, as our fathers treated the emigrant nobility of France.

A less pretentious postwar novel of the Confederate South was *Debenham's Vow* by a popular woman novelist Amelia B. Edwards. Temple Debenham, her hero, is a penniless baron who during the war turns blockade runner and makes a fortune selling rifles, clothing and rum to the Confederates and buying cotton at five cents a pound in Charleston to sell it in Manchester for eighteen. The blockade-running adventures are described in detail. In America the welcome that Debenham receives from hospitable Charleston families frequently tempts him to swerve from his official English neutrality. Miss Edwards' benefit of hindsight protects her hero from inaccurate American judgments and predictions, but she is often interested in showing what affinities exist between the aristocracy of Charleston and a nobly born Englishman. In the end Debenham decides that he cannot say to the beautiful Diana Ashby of Charleston what he would like to say, "Gallant and chivalrous as you are, descended from old English cavaliers as you are, your cause is stained with the sin of slavery." Back in England Debenham discusses the war at dinner parties. Miss Edwards, in 1870, was trying to reconstruct upper-class opinion during the war and to give her hero the sentiments that had turned out to be right. An older companion announces in one conversation that "less than one third of the men in the Federal regiments are genuine Northerners; and that their ranks, being recruited from the back slums of Boston and New York, are chiefly made up of English, Irish and German immigrants." Debenham agrees that the strength of the North lies in her unlimited supply of men:

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> The population of the South, on the other hand, consists chiefly of masters, an independent middle class and slaves. Hence it follows that in many Confederate regiments every soldier is a gentleman. I have myself seen a Charleston regiment, one thousand strong, recruited entirely from the landed gentry and the learned professions. Let them fight as bravely as they will, these gentleman soldiers must be outnumbered at last.

Lord Stockbridge replies, "According to my creed, one gentleman is equal to a score of mercenaries." "But not to five hundred," Debenham reminds him.

The Yankees of the novel are mean-spirited creatures. A renegade old sailor from Martha's Vineyard pilots the blockade runners in and out of Charleston Harbor at seven hundred and fifty pounds a round trip. At Nassau, the center of the new trade, another New Englander repairs English ships and draws the line only at receiving his pay in Confederate money. Debenham interprets these interesting specimens for an English friend,

> The vein of heroism is still there; imbedded, perhaps, in much base material, but still there, an inherent part of the man's nature. There is even a symbolic element mixed up with the worship of the almighty dollar. Dollar is power, and power is national greatness; so, even here, patriotism is touched at a tangent.

R. D. Blackmore, seven years after *Lorna Doone* had made him famous, serialized an American novel, *Erema,* in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1876-77. It was a sensational novel, after the manner of Charles Reade. His American scenes are unreal, his Americans speak a wild combination of Biblical and cockney English, but one incident of his plot deserves recording. A young Californian loves an English girl and when she returns to England he is so heartbroken that he travels east and joins the Confederate Army. The heroine comes back to America and a week after the battle of Chancellorsville she is in Washington, hoping, rather illogically, to get news there of her Southern hero. He is, of course, in Washington in a hospital lying wounded in a serious and wonderful way. At Chancellorsville he had fought as a colonel under "Stonewall" Jackson, and after the rout of the Northern forces he had been at the head of his regiment when his keen eyes had seen suspicious figures ahead in the dusk. He gave the command to fire, and Blackmore had depicted for English readers the tragedy of the Southern officer who accidentally shot England's favorite Confederate general. "Poor Ephraim Gundry's rare power of sight had been fatal perhaps to the cause he fought for, or at least to its greatest

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captain." In his shame the young man falls on his sword, Roman fashion, and it snaps off after piercing his body. But two New York surgeons perform a delicate operation, and he and his wife, now Lady Castlewood, retire to the splendid scenery of California.

It is hard to categorize William Hepworth Dixon's novel of America and England, *Diana, Lady Lyle,* published in 1877, although it follows in outline the pattern of post-Civil War fiction found in these other novels. Its matter is the romantic marriage between the scion of a noble English family, Sir Leonard Lyle, and a glorious daughter of Virginia, Diana Randolph. Dixon's story depends on the usual bonds of a common culture and lineage between the Southern landed gentry and the English aristocracy even to the extent of demonstrating that Diana's father, Senator Randolph, was the tenth cousin of the Duke of Doncaster and carried in his veins the blood of an English king and a Scottish prince. But Diana is also one quarter Negro even though she is her father's legitimate daughter and heiress. Dixon had combined the "beautiful quadroon" plot of prewar antislavery fiction with a romance of the Civil War.

For all its extravagance of plot and furnishings Dixon's novel was meant as a demonstration that miscegenation offered a solution for the South after its defeat. We know this because *Diana* is written out of an earlier book, *New America,* which when it was published in 1867 became the book of the season and rapidly went through eight editions in England, three in America, and was translated into French, German, Russian, Dutch and Italian. *New America* was written from Dixon's half-formed ideas on race, religion, sex and cultural cycles. It began as a conventional travelogue of an Englishman's journey across the plains from St. Louis to Denver and over the mountains to Salt Lake City. Then for a hundred pages Dixon analyzed the significance of Mormonism. He lived closely with the Mormons, described their community with some admiration and then moved back east to visit other religious colonies, the Shakers at Mt. Lebanon, New York, a Spiritualist convention in Providence, the female Seers in Boston, the Dunkers at Lancaster and the Bible Communists of Oneida. Its success tempted him to add a sequel which he called *Spiritual Wives.* (*The Pall Mall Gazette* accused this second book of indecency, and Dixon, who was editor of the literary weekly *The Athenaeum,* brought action for libel and won the verdict.)

Dixon's analysis of American life in *New America* was based upon his theory of a national American polarity between the values of individual freedom and the urge toward social unity. He thought that the Civil War had been preceded by a period of "great unrest" in which the divisive forces in the United States had been all-powerful. The flight of our

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writers and artists to Europe, the rise of minor political parties, schisms in the churches, agitation for women's rights and attacks on property and morality were some of the evidence he adduced to illustrate "the final stage of freedom, as it verges into chaos." The Civil War had shown America the terms of her choice, "The prize for which the South contended against the North was nothing less than the Principles of National Life." For this Englishman the Northern war aims had proved to be national unity, social equality, belief in the ideas of democracy and faith in moral progress. In the South ". . . stood the lotus eater, with his airs and languors, his refinements and traditions"; in the North ". . . stood the craftsman, with his head full of ideas, his heart full of faith, his arm full of strength . . . on one side chivalry with all its glories and its vices; on the other side equality with its ardors and its hopes." One chance the Southern white man had, Dixon thought, "one from which it is commonly believed his pride must revolt, and his taste recoil,—a family alliance with the negro race." Would it not restore the strength of the "pale and bilious Southerners" to marry their sons and daughters to the "highly gifted and emotional" Negroes? The Negro, Dixon said, may be the coming man in the States. During the war he had proved himself a man. If miscegenation had been practiced for years in the South anyway, ". . . why not give legal standing and moral sanction to what is already the habit of the stronger sex?"

Many of Dixon's observations must have shocked and confused his American readers. How many new misconceptions of the United States his popular book spread in Europe it would be hard to determine. When he came to write his American novel he chose to cast his story of a mixed marriage on such a melodramatic level that it might not have occurred to his English readers that he was posing a fair illustration of this thesis. The story is too elaborate to recount in detail. The scene is the South in 1860, a once noble but now decadent country. Diana, the beautiful quadroon, owes a great deal to all her glamorous predecessors in slavery fiction. After the death of her father—who has acknowledged her mother's freedom and her legitimate birth only in a private paper which is seized by a wicked overseer—she is carried north by the underground railway, becomes a great lady and departs for England. She does not tell her English husband of her Negro blood, and in England and India during the war she remains loyal to the South and becomes to her husband's fellow Army officers the beautiful personification of the Glorious Cause. We are told that in India Lee is the hero of all the British garrisons and that a "Southern lady, representing chivalry and aristocracy, is soon the rage in every club and coterie." At last Sir Leonard has to learn from the

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overseer who had followed Diana to England of the supposed shame of his wife's birth. His decision is to exile himself from home and this disgrace cast upon his house and heir. But when he discovers the paper which proves Diana's legitimate birth he returns to his wife and son in time to be elected to Parliament as the Conservative "Young England" candidate for his county.

The case for the South, uncomplicated by any racial theory, was pushed to its furthest extreme in a novel published in 1880 by Percy Greg. Greg was a journalist who during the war had contributed to the pro-Southern *Manchester Guardian* and *Saturday Review* as a propagandist on the payroll of the chief secret agent of the Confederacy in London. He wrote several novels including a scientific romance set on Mars. A biographical note describes him as a man who tended to violent extremes, ". . . in youth a secularist, in middle life a spiritualist, and in particular an embittered adversary of the American Union." To justify and display his bitterness he wrote two novels of the Civil War South, *Errant* and *Sanguelac,* and a *History of the United States from the Foundation of Virginia to the Reconstruction of the Union* (1887).

The history is a monument to Greg's deep hatred of the North. The postwar *Saturday Review* thought he protested too much, "The statesmanship, the wisdom, the culture, the valor, the chivalry, the lofty refined courtesy of the South are insisted on till one longs for the suppression of those immaculate creatures." He writes from a most elaborate North-South, Puritan-Cavalier parallel. What was once worthy in the old Roundhead tradition in New England disappeared or deteriorated during the Revolution. The greater part of the "natural aristocracy" of Massachusetts was driven into exile and only the scum remained. The Southern planters, on the other hand, had kept alive "the finest and most characteristically English type of Anglo-Saxon race." Slavery is described as a relation between classes similar to that which "an English squire feels for his tenants and cottagers," and the "Chivalric spirit and punctilious courtesy of former days have been preserved by the appeal to the duel still sanctioned by Southern opinion." Inevitably, then, the war becomes for Greg the unequal contest between Union hordes who "delighted in humiliating, harassing, and mortifying women, young girls and children" and a vastly outnumbered group of gentlemen "who would not even take water from a private back-yard without asking leave."

With such advantages as this Miniver Cheevy passion for the Southern chivalry and the industry that went into his eight-hundred-page history Greg could not fail to surpass his fellow defenders of the South among the Victorian novelists. In *Errant* he used every detail of the pro-Southern

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novel and achieved a new intensity by multiplying by a factor of ten. His Englishman, Lionel D'Arcy, has become a Louisiana planter after participating in a fatal duel in France. In the New Orleans slave market he buys a "lot" of Negroes, including four beautiful quadroons, one of whom is the lovely American girl he had met in India when she was touring with her owner-father. Like most of the other English protagonists in these war novels D'Arcy is a commander of cavalry troops, in his case called "The Devil's Own." He leads his troops against "Beast" Butler in New Orleans and as the fury of the war increases he vows by the "Starry Cross" "never to rest or spare while there were Yankee soldiers to kill and Northern homes to desolate." His sacred fealty is sworn to General Lee, "the noblest Christian and soldier of his age." D'Arcy dies defending Lee's retreat from Richmond.

Greg's novel wallows in gore and cruelty. Such scenes as these written twenty-five years after the war suggest a disordered mind:

> The Colonel struck not a blow till he reached him: and then struck twice, like lightning, but I am sure both blows were well and truly aimed—and not to kill. The first gashed his face from eyes to chin, so that the mother who bore him could never have endured to look on the ghastly object again; the second caught him above the hips, crippling him horribly and forever. The man's screams were hideous to hear."
>
> "Our men stood round and as the Yankees tried to escape from the flames, he had them driven back at the point of the lance. Then when the howling and yelling from within the building became fainter, when that business was well-nigh done, he came where Ballard lay.

Henry Adams' eccentricity could not be carried much further than this.

Nor was it. The English devotion to the cause of a Southern aristocracy sank to rest in the quieter formulas of a G. A. Henty's boys' novel. There the vestiges of its social faith showed only faintly. Several generations of Henty's young English readers were probably unmoved, even unenlightened, by reading in *With Lee in Virginia* that "one Southerner fighting for home and liberty is more than a match for two hired Germans or Irishmen, even with a good large sprinkling of Yankees thrown in," or that in the paternalistic communities of the old South the slaves were luckier than their English counterparts, for the "fear of loss of employment or the pressure of want, ever present to our English labourers, had never fallen upon them."

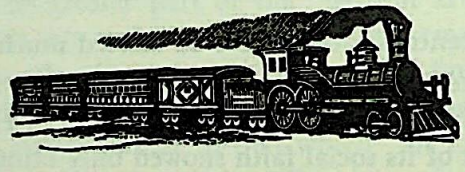
The vitality and the duration of this pro-Confederate tradition in English fiction may seem to require more explanation than has been offered here. It is surprising that so much sentiment and romance could be con-

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centrated on a way of American life which before the war had attracted almost no attention from English novelists. The wartime novels had, of course, only fictionalized the view of the war spread by the *Times,* the *Saturday Review* and most of the other influential journals of England. And in their animosity against Yankees these novelists were continuing the antagonism against America which had begun to be popular in the thirties. No English novelist had ever written a pro-Northern novel. Anti-Yankee stories and stage caricatures had been famous for years before the Civil War. But there will probably never again be another rallying cry like the Rebel Yell to gather together a school of English novelists so ardently attached to one section of America and so anxious to do battle against the rest of it as a nation of perfidious Yankees.

A former Professor of English, Charles E. Shain is President of Connecticut College at New London. [This article appeared in Vol. XIV, No. 3 (Fall, 1962).]



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Oliver W. Larkin

Two Yankee Painters in Italy: Thomas Cole and Samuel Morse

SURVEYING the long record of American painters in Italy, from Benjamin West and John Copley in the eighteenth century to Eugene Berman and Loren MacIver in our time, one concludes that Italian influence upon our art and consequently upon our culture has been determined not only by the personal motives of the artists and their capacity to assimilate what Italy offered, but also at any given time by the character of the American society from which the painter came and to which, with few exceptions, he returned.

West in 1760 and Copley in 1774 were talented provincials who could not be content with the meager artistic training and the limited patronage of Philadelphia and Boston. West believed that only by firsthand study of the old masters could one rise above mere portrait-making to attempt the higher and nobler forms of art; and his Roman visit was essential to his purpose: to combine the graceful drawing and design of Raphael with the light-and-shade of Correggio and the color of Titian, until "every borrowed grace became his own." Copley's ambition was nourished by engravings from Italian masters and by a few clumsy copies which Smibert and West had made. "When I can get disengaged from this frozen region," he wrote, "I shall take my flight to Europe, I shall there be heated with the light of the enchanting works of a Raphael, a Rubens, Coregio [sic] and a Veronese." Having made the Italian pilgrimage, both West and Copley spent the rest of their lives as distinguished and influential members of the British School, with only an occasional nostalgic thought of the country from which they had detached themselves.

Artistic migrations to Italy in the nineteenth century were of another

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sort. The Yankee travelers of the eighteen-thirties, including the sculptors Horatio Greenough and Hiram Powers, the architect Ithiel Town, and the painters Robert Weir, Luther Terry, Rembrandt Peale, Thomas Cole, and Samuel Morse, were no longer provincials, but the sons of a new and independent republic. Many of them were closely associated with the forward-looking writers of the day—Cole with Bryant, Morse with Cooper—whose literary attitudes were ardently nationalistic.

To be sure, the sensuous beauty of Italian skies, lakes and mountains, first deeply felt by Washington Allston in 1804, was not lost upon this group, nor was the romantic appeal of Italy's venerable monuments. They drew from life at the Academy, copied Raphael and Michelangelo at the Vatican, sketched the Claudian Aqueduct near Tivoli, and in their leisure time went, like Weir, to "dream by moonlight among the ruins of Imperial Rome" or to join their comrades at the famous Café Greco. Peale was entranced by the Italian spring of 1830, though tormented by its dust and its fleas; Greenough worked happily at his marble cherubs in "dear, compact, bird's-eye, cheap, quiet, mind-your-own business, beautiful Florence." In the America from which they came, a romantic love of "natural" scenery, a fondness for Gothic cottages and for picturesque landscape gardening were signs of expanding American sensibilities and of resistance to the new ugliness of urban growth, of factories, of railways. These artists would have agreed with Cooper's subsequent observation that Italy provided a charming alternative to the harshness of Jacksonian America; that a country on the decline was more enjoyable to refined spirits than a country on the advance. "Man," said Cooper, "is far more removed from the money-getting mania in Italy than in almost any other portion of the Christian world . . . the time of her wealth and power has gone by, leaving in its train a thousand fruits, that would seem to be all the more savory, as the stem on which they grew would appear to be approaching its decay."

Yet none of these travelers for a moment doubted the superiority of American ideals and institutions to those of a caste-ridden Europe. Bryant spoke for them all when he compared Italy's government of power with the government of opinion back home, and wrote, "I think I shall return to America even a better patriot than when I left it." Among the painters there was no worship of the hallowed Italian masters, but shrewd appraisal; Rembrandt Peale scorned the "idolatrous copyists" of the Italian galleries, noted that Michelangelo's "Last Judgment" was as much a ruin as the Baths of Caracalla, and dared to condemn the "Fornarina" of Raphael for its bad color, its

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ugliness, and its vulgarity. These Yankees were grateful for the respite from harsh American realities, but their clear purpose was to enlarge their ideas and to perfect their skill in order to raise the artistic standards of American art; and Peale's bad verses expressed their confidence:

> The sun of Art which glowed in Rome, may rise
> To equal splendour in our Western skies.

Samuel Morse and Thomas Cole, who celebrated Washington's birthday in 1831 at a Roman dinner with thirty compatriots, and with Cooper as master of ceremonies, had played leading parts, five years before they went abroad, in the founding of the National Academy of Design. Morse, as its President, had boldly announced that the new institution could serve young American art students as a substitute for foreign study, and he warned those students of the perils of prolonged European visits. The seeds of American talent, he said, would grow faster in the genial European climate, but must then be plucked up and transplanted in colder and less fertile native ground. He spoke from sad experience—the public indifference to his "Death of Hercules" and his "Hall of Representatives" which had confined him to the limited field of portrait painting. He had proved his mastery of that field in 1825 with his superb "Lafayette," and sailed for Europe to break away from the cares of his Academy position, to assuage his grief over the tragic loss of his young wife, and to rekindle his former ardor, as he said, in Rome and Venice. His dream was to produce a large "history piece" which would do honor to his country. As a widower of thirty-nine with three small children and no funds, he financed his journey by making commissioned copies of old masters. He made notes in galleries, sketched Pliny's villa on Lake Como and groups of peasant women on the steps of Saint Peter's, spent long hours at his easel before the "School of Athens," and listened in Florence to Bellini's *Romeo and Juliet*, in Rome to the *Miserere* of Allegri.

But Morse, the son of a New England Calvinist and the pupil of Timothy Dwight, was blind and deaf to much of the Italian spectacle. Milan Cathedral, he wrote, symbolized a religion of the imagination. Here architecture, painting, sculpture and music "enchant the senses and impose on the understanding by substituting for the solemn truths of God's Word, which are addressed to the understanding, the fictions of poetry and the delusions of feeling. The theatre is a daughter of this prolific mother of abominations, and a child worthy of its dam."

Soberly and meticulously, Morse jotted down in his notebook the

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colors used by Guercino, and saved time by inventing a series of abbreviations to record his impressions of the Vatican pictures—D for design, C for color, CHA for character, CHI for chiaroscuro, COM for composition. His mind, as Bryant remarked years later, was an organizing mind, and "strongly impelled to analyze the processes of his art, to give them a certain scientific precision, to reduce them to fixed rules."

The temperament of Morse's traveling companion, Thomas Cole, was the antithesis of his own. Since his childhood among the lakes and forests of Ohio, Cole had been a dreamer and a mystic who relied upon intuition rather than reason when he made his first American landscapes, those "scenes of wild grandeur," as Bryant called them, half real and half imagined, those "aerial mountain tops with their mighty growth of forests never touched by the axe . . . streams never deformed by culture . . . skies bright with the hues of our own climate."

Two visits to Italy did not alter Cole's preference for American scenery; but the land where his admired Claude, Poussin, and Rosa had worked enthralled his senses, enriched his imaginative powers, and gave him courage for more ambitious undertakings. In Italy he found freedom from "the vortex of politics and utilitarianism that is forever whirling at home"; he found new problems for his brush as he tried to suggest sunset over the Arno, the movement of clouds across the Campagna, the desolation of a crumbling aqueduct. Out of his study from life at the Florence Academy came his powerful nude, "The Dead Abel"; out of his meditations among the Roman ruins came his idea of painting the cycle of a great civilization, its rude beginnings, its imperial grandeur and its final dissolution and decay. Best of all, his observation of the old Italian masters provided him with alternatives to the formulas of the Hudson River School and, for a time at least, corrected his tendency to overload his landscapes with moral and religious meanings. Those masters, he noted, "did not sit down, as the modern artist so often does, with a preconceived notion of what *is* or *ought* to be beautiful"; and he labored to make their principles his own—principles of direct, unaffected, and truthful response to the beauty of nature.

At the spring exhibition of the National Academy in New York in 1833, it was possible to see and to judge the effect of Italy upon the realistic Morse and the romantic Cole. The former showed a view of Amalfi, "The Brigand Alarmed," "Calabrian Minstrels," and "The Peasant Girl of Nettuno"; among eight canvases by the latter were "The Fountain of Egeria," "The Temples of Paestum," and "Cascatalli of Tivoli." That assiduous patron of American art, ex-Mayor Philip

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Hone, recorded his judgment of the Morse and Cole canvases with his customary shrewdness:

> The former are cold and hard as ever; the warmth of the sunny skies of Italy does not appear to have had any effect upon the worthy president. He is an excellent fellow and is well acquainted with the principles of his art; but he has no imagination . . . he cannot design. There is no poetry about his paintings, and his prose consists of straight lines, which look as if they had been stretched to their utmost tension to form clothes-lines.
>
> Cole maintains his ground. His pictures are admirable representations of that description of scenery which he has studied so well in his native forests. His landscapes are too solid, massy, and umbrageous to please the eye of an amateur accustomed to Italian skies and English park-scenery, but I think every American is bound to prove his love of country by admiring Cole.

From our own vantage point in time, we can judge more accurately the effects of their Italian journeys on these two Yankee painters. Morse, in spite of his Puritan inhibitions and his excessive rationalism, learned in Italy to wield a lighter and more sensitive brush. His small copy of Tintoretto's "Miracle of the Slave" echoes the splendid color-orchestration of the master; his portrait of his daughter Susan, "The Muse," reveals a new grace of composition; and his few likenesses of New Yorkers in the eighteen-thirties have breadth and economy of means. His masterpiece, "The Exhibition Gallery of the Louvre," begun in Paris after his Italian tour and completed in America, was an astonishing *tour de force* with its representation, on a miniature scale, of such master works as Titian's "Entombment," the "Mona Lisa," and Correggio's "Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine." Henceforth, however, the life of Morse was to allow little or no time for painting. He returned from Europe with the unfinished canvas of his "Louvre," but also with a bookful of notes on the construction and operation of an electromagnetic telegraph.

Cole's subsequent work was to alternate between superb records of American scenery and paintings on what a clergyman friend called "the high moral plane." His "Oxbow," although done in the hope of sale to some "dollar-godded utilitarian," was a panorama of the Connecticut River Valley which showed the healthier results of his Italian study. Its subject appealed to him because it was so thoroughly American. "You see no ruined tower to tell of outrage, no gorgeous temple to speak of ostentation; but freedom's offspring—peace, security and happiness." Cole's *Course of Empire*, a series of five highly imaginative pictures showing the rise, grandeur, and decline of a civiliza-

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tion, was the fruit of his meditations among the ruins of Rome. The Catskills and the White Mountains were for Cole "undefiled works of God," in contrast to those European scenes where man had shaped and tamed nature; and Cole painted them with the truthfulness he had found in the Italian works of Claude and Poussin.

Another generation of Americans was to flood Italy between 1850 and 1875, who were neither provincials nor nationalists, but cosmopolitans—William Page, Albert Bierstadt, Worthington Whittredge, George Inness, Jasper Cropsey, Frederick Church, John Chapman, Thomas Crawford, Harriet Hosmer, William Story, Chauncey Ives, William Rinehart, and many others. Most of these artists came, as Story did, to find a more congenial atmosphere than America of the Gilded Age. Story had seen horse-car advertisements at home of "Reversible Food" and "Overstrung Pianos." Concluding that everything in America was overstrung, he made Italy his permanent home, and several others of this group did likewise. To picnic with the Brownings, to see Taglioni and hear Rossini, to watch Roman cardinals in processions by torchlight, was a delightful and endless spectacle; yet earlier artists like Cole and Morse may, after all, have derived more solid nourishment from Italy. They seem in prospect to have been more sure of what they wanted, hence more skillful in assimilation. Perhaps Henry James's remark is pertinent: "The 'picturesque' subject . . . has by no means all its advantages in the picturesque country; yields its full taste, gives out *all* its inspiration . . . in some air unfriendly to the element at large. In Rome, Florence, Siena, there was too much [picturesqueness]."

Afternote

Morse and Cole are discussed in Carlton Mabee, *The American Leonardo* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1943); Oliver Larkin, *Samuel F. B. Morse and American Democratic Art* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1954); Esther I. Seaver, *Thomas Cole* (Hartford, Conn., Wadsworth Atheneum, 1949); Edgar P. Richardson, *Painting in America* (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1956); and James T. Flexner, *That Wilder Image* (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1962).

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David Strauss

French Critics and American Jazz

JAZZ IS A MORE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE IN FRANCE THAN IT IS, OR EVER HAS been, in the United States. This is probably a result of the doctrinaire treatment which it receives at the hands of its French critics. *Jazz Hot,* a monthly publication, enlightens its readers with articles on "Question de Doctrine" in which jazz as a music and a social philosophy is defined and described.[1] Once the articles of faith are enumerated, they must be defended against outside forces which threaten to destroy them. In the first postwar issue of *Jazz Hot* the editors chose to make clear to the French jazz public their own sense of duty.

> We know very well that there are not two musics equally valid in jazz substance, but only the good (the true) . . . and the other. And without ever having pretended to be the only possessors of the unique truth, time has proved to us—very much so—that from the beginning we were on the right track in siding with the Louis Armstrongs, the Bessie Smiths, the Coleman Hawkins. . . .[2]

Jazz appears to be endowed here with all the elements of a religion which the faithful (the critics) must defend against heretics and infidels. The real threat, as we shall see, is posed not by an indifferent or even hostile public, but by those who claim to play a music which they call jazz, but which is not the authentic item. The rigidity of the definition is clear. There is no such thing as a continuum along which one finds music possessing some of the elements of jazz. There is simply jazz and nonjazz, as there is good and bad, or truth and falsehood.

Because of this systematic treatment and the presumed purity of jazz, the music is subject to corruption from several sources. On the one hand, as a proletarian item, it is unable to defend itself against the sinister designs of the bourgeois world. "Like the movies or the automobile, jazz

[1] André Hodeir, "Question de Doctrine," *Jazz Hot,* Oct. 1948, p. 3.
[2] *Jazz Hot,* Oct. 1945, p. 2.

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has become an industry since the day when Yankee businessmen discovered not jazz itself—as you might well guess—but the possibility of a new exploitation."[3] Implicit here is a concept of jazz as a pure and uncorrupted art divorced from the commercial world and performed by jazz musicians for the simple joy of playing. Dollars and jazz mix like oil and water. If Yankee businessmen are suspect for commercial exploitation of proletarian art, they compound this class crime with a racial one, since they are white men meddling with Negro music. The purity of jazz depends not only on its isolation from the dollar, but from the whole apparatus of western civilization, for

> Negro musicians have a unique character: a spirit of their own, one which the whites lack, a kind of ferocity of rhythm, a violence which they call "swing." They also have a great deal of sensitivity, but a brutal sensitivity, absolutely not the sensitivity of whites.[4]

According to the doctrine, then, jazz is a noncommercial art, performed by black men whose principal qualification for playing is their close resemblance to savages. It has no relation to western music, and, in fact, derives its originality from the broad differences between the African and the westerner.

Among the most insidious of the threats to this rigidly elaborated doctrine was the evolution of jazz in the early 1940s toward new forms which attempted to incorporate some of the recent discoveries in European music. The bop school and the cool jazzmen, while obviously drawing on their heritage from the era of classical jazz, displayed an alarming interest in Stravinsky and Schoenberg. To some French critics, this evolution was heresy, and they insisted that the new synthesis was not jazz at all. Led by Hugues Panassié,[5] they fought a losing battle for the control of *Jazz Hot* and the French jazz clubs.[6] After the purge of Panassié from the editorial staff of the magazine, the well-known French critic herded his followers into new jazz clubs, leaving the French jazz world split between the faithful who refused to accept the heresy of Charlie Parker and Miles Davis, and the modern groups which managed to revise their doctrine to incorporate the new forms of playing. While there were similar disputes in the United States during the postwar period, no one has seriously suggested that jazz ceased to exist after 1945, probably because no one had so rigidly formulated a definition of jazz beforehand.

[3] Charles Delaunay, "La Musique de Jazz . . . Cette Prostituée," *Jazz Hot*, Nov. 1945, p. 7.

[4] Olivier Despax, "Une Jeune qui voit Blanc," *Jazz Hot*, May 1959, pp. 14-15.

[5] Coleman Hawkins, the saxophonist, once said of Panassié that "the man just has a one-track mind." Quoted in Leonard Feather, "Coleman Hawkins," in *The Jazz Makers* (New York, 1957).

[6] "La Scission des Hot Clubs," *Jazz Hot*, Nov. 1947, p. 26.

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As one French critic put it, "In New York you can, during the same evening, hear Bobby Hackett, Teagarden, Miles Davis, Count Basie, etc. This is excellent. The notion of 'old' or of 'modern' does not exist in the same manner as in France." [7]

But the bop school was alarming to French critics for still another reason. It tended not only to admit European forms, but white musicians as well. The trouble had begun in the late 1930s with Benny Goodman's white band which pretended to play jazz. The question immediately arose as to Goodman's credentials for playing Negro music. Clearly, he was lacking in pigment. According to *Jazz Hot*, Goodman was an impostor, who, having learned his technique from Negro musicians, was taking bread from their mouths and corrupting their music.[8] In this respect, the postwar jazz world was even more difficult to grasp for such critics. Lester Young, the father of cool jazz, spoke seriously of his debt to Frankie Trumbauer, a white musician of the 1920s.[9] While the critics attempted to square this with their doctrine, Miles Davis, the leading trumpet of cool jazz, was playing with Gerry Mulligan in integrated bands and had none of the brutal rhythmic qualities which supposedly characterized the playing of Negro musicians. In short, he played "white."

The whole issue came to a head with the translation and publication of an article by the jazz critic Leonard Feather accusing the French of a kind of reverse discrimination which he called "Crow-Jim." Feather points to the important contributions of white musicians to jazz, and indicates that the Negrophilism of the left has distorted a musical phenomenon and transformed it into a racial one. He asserts that "The most intolerant racists are those Americans from the south who believe that the Negro is a simple, infantile, and happy person who was born singing and dancing. Although he doesn't realize it, this attitude corresponds somewhat to that of the European jazz fan." [10] While some French critics, notably André Hodeir, admitted these charges and attempted to turn the discussion to the musical aspects of jazz, others were enraged by the article and replied that Feather and his kind were engaged in a conspiracy to destroy jazz.

> American criticism does not seem to us to be based on historical truth, but rather to be guided by a very subtle neo-racism which consists of temporarily rejecting segregation in order, on the one hand, to assimilate the style of the Negroes as far as this is possible, while, on the other

[7] Henri Renaud, "New York reste vraiment la ville de Jazz," *Jazz Hot*, Nov. 1959, pp. 14-15.

[8] Hugues Panassié, "Benny Goodman: Faux Grand Homme du Jazz," *Jazz Hot*, July-Aug. 1946, p. 9.

[9] Charles Delaunay, "'Tram' disparait," *Jazz Hot*, July-Aug. 1956, p. 15.

[10] "Préjugés," (trans. J. J. Finsterwald) *Jazz Hot*, June 1950, p. 11.

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hand, imposing on jazz musical conceptions which are typically white.[11] This curious attack on American critics accuses them of racism on the grounds that they encourage integration in jazz, and then proceeds to revive by implication the concept of jazz as art which thrives in isolation from white civilization. Feather seems not so much to have dispelled "Crow-Jim" as to have evoked an even firmer commitment to the original doctrine.

The anti-American note sounded above is echoed consistently in the columns of *Jazz Hot*. Not surprisingly, the treatment accorded the jazz musicians provides an excellent point of departure for the expression of such sentiments. The fact that jazz received serious attention in France before American intellectuals paid court to it has been a matter of national pride to the French intellectuals. While Hugues Panassié wrote the first serious history of jazz in 1934,[12] *Jazz Hot* published its first issues a year later. The first postwar volume of the magazine provided a proper moment for distinguishing the clairvoyance of French intellectuals from the indifference of the Americans. "Everyone knows that jazz was born in the U. S. But its right to distinction was recognized in Europe. Long before the Yankees realized its interest, intellectuals of the Old Continent became interested in this new music." [13] Not only are Yankee intellectuals at fault for their neglect of jazz, but so is the American public. "It is quite clear that white Americans understand jazz less and less. They do not make it their daily fodder as I thought," reports Simone de Beauvoir in her travels in 1947.[14] Recalling her visit to a New Orleans night club, Miss de Beauvoir observes of the spectators that "They toy with jazz and scorn it from the height of their white man's dignity where they are well-established financially and morally. Great lords of the past trifled with clowns and historians with a similar arrogance." [15] This jazz musician, so scorned by his American audience, is grateful for the sympathy shown by Miss de Beauvoir and her companion "who questions the trumpet player, they exchange words, and the young Negro lights up . . . he feels the need to play for someone and it is a chance which he is not often given." [16] The jazzman, rebuffed by an indifferent American society, is rescued by the sympathy bestowed upon him from the solicitous French travelers. The theme suggested above becomes an assertion in the following backstage scene:

> When I entered the dressing room of Armstrong—the only white man among many colored admirers—I was strongly moved. He came to meet

[11] Pierre Derens, "Tribune Libre," *Jazz Hot*, Feb. 1952, p. 10.
[12] *Le Jazz Hot* (Paris, 1934).
[13] *Jazz Hot*, Oct. 1945, p. 2.
[14] *L'Amérique au jour le jour* (Paris, 1954), p. 258.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 223.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 223.

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me and appeared happy to see a Frenchman. He hopes to return to France in the near future and confided in me that the French were, in his opinion, the people who understood best the good traditional jazz.[17]

French critics often seem more interested in using jazz as a handy instrument for disparagement of American intellectuals, businessmen and the public than in discussing current developments of the music. The reverse side of the anti-American coin is the conscious pride of French critics in their concern for jazz and the American Negro.

The cult of jazz is widespread in France, as the headlines given in the Paris dailies to Sidney Bechet's death indicate, but it does not have equal appeal to all segments of French society.[18] While Jean-Paul Sartre's journal, *Les Temps Modernes,* has published half a dozen articles on the subject in the years since the war, *La Revue des Deux Mondes,* a more traditional journal, has printed only two short articles (one a continuation of the other), both devoted to a discussion of jazz records rather than performers.[19] Moreover, the articles appearing in *Les Temps Modernes* were written by Lucien Malsen and André Hodeir, both important contributors to *Jazz Hot,* indicating direct personal contact between the editorial staffs of the two journals. In an article entitled "From existentialism in 1948 to Hard Bop in 1959, the St. Germain-des-Pres Club is always in the avant-garde," the reporter contends that jazz was simply the latest and most fashionable among left-wing fads.[20] The same crowd which adopted Sartre's philosophy had simply moved on to embrace jazz as a left-wing movement. Granting the truth of this observation, it seems strange that a simple, non-political music should exert such a systematic power of attraction on a highly sophisticated left-wing group in a foreign country.

Despite the apolitical nature of jazz there is much evidence to suggest that interest in the music is simply one manifestation of concern with the Negro problem. For example, *Jazz Hot* justifies the appearance of a review of Franklin Frazier's book *Black Bourgeoisie* on the grounds that "Although the book does not deal with Negro music (to which it makes allusion from time to time) it is worth the attention of all those who have become interested in conditions of Negro life through the music."[21] It is not altogether surprising that a second review of the same book appears in *Les Temps Modernes.* The reviewer points out that the book was translated into French and published in France before it appeared in the United States, suggesting the appetite of the French left-wing for

[17] Pierre Petitat, "Louis Armstrong à Détroit," *Jazz Hot,* Mar. 1946, p. 8.
[18] Jacques J. Gaspard, "Sidney Bechet, Maître et Symbole," *Jazz Hot,* July 1959, pp. 12-13.
[19] Maurice Cullaz, "Les Disques de Jazz," *La Revue des Deux Mondes,* May 15, 1950, p. 367.
[20] *Jazz Hot,* Feb. 1959, p. 32.
[21] *Jazz Hot,* Jan. 1956, p. 42.

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information about Negro life in America.[22] Not only does *Jazz Hot* review sociological studies concerning the Negro, but for six issues it published a series of travelogues on Harlem and other Negro sections of large cities entitled "Voyage au Pays de Blues." [23] Such political items as "Eisenhower inaugurated the new building of the YMCA in Harlem, famous Negro section of New York. . . ." [24] are also reported in the columns of this jazz monthly. For many French jazz fans, then, the music is inevitably but an aspect of larger questions of a political and social nature. Jazz is defined as Negro-American music, and as such is an instrument for left-wing denunciation of poverty, race prejudice and exploitation by the ruling class.

Assuming at the outset a doctrinaire approach which emphasizes the African character of jazz and the isolation of the Negro from American life, the French critic finds in his study of jazz confirmation of the many unsavory aspects of American life, including segregation and class exploitation. In contrast, he provides his own audience, generally of left-wing sentiments, with assurance of their virtue in upholding good music, the poor and the exploited—all neglected in America. In this sense, the jazz critic is less a student of Negro-American music than an agent for promoting French nationalism of the left.

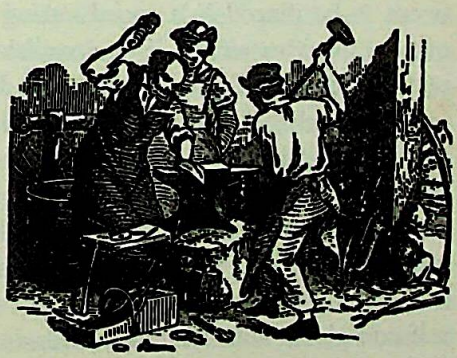
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[22] *Les Temps Modernes*, Feb. 1956, p. 1339.
[23] *Jazz Hot*, Dec. 1959—May 1960. [24] *Jazz Hot*, Oct. 1949, p. 22.

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Toward Method



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Henry Nash Smith

Can "American Studies" Develop a Method?

I MUST ask the reader to accept for the present occasion two definitions. By "American Studies" I shall mean "the study of American culture, past and present, as a whole"; and by "culture" I shall mean "the way in which subjective experience is organized."

The problem of method in American Studies arises because the investigation of American culture as a whole does not coincide with the customary field of operations of any established academic discipline. The phrase "as a whole" does not, of course, imply a global attack directed simultaneously toward all the aspects of our culture. The defining characteristic of American Studies is not the size of its problems but the effort to view any given subject of investigation from new perspectives, to take into account as many aspects of it as possible.

In order to illustrate the need for such a shift of perspective, I should like to draw upon my own experience by considering the example of Mark Twain. He was a writer and his work belongs to the traditional field of American literature. But I can think of no other man whose work so clearly needs to be placed in a social setting before it can be fully understood. No other American writer of comparable importance is so unmistakably of the people. He took his materials and his technique from American culture, and he developed in collaboration with his audience. He served his apprenticeship in newspaper offices; he perfected his style by practicing the art of oral story-telling. His work is an almost uninterrupted commentary on matters uppermost in the minds of his readers and hearers, and he had a remarkable ability to objectify the memories and dreams of his public. It would be peculiarly artificial to try to deal with his books as if they were self-contained autonomous universes.

But how can one do justice to this central phenomenon of nineteenth-

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century American culture? It is true that much study of Mark Twain's life and work needs to be undertaken along perfectly conventional lines: his dependence upon literary predecessors, for example, has even yet not been fully investigated. Yet the student of this remarkable career soon finds himself asking questions that lead beyond the usual limits of literary history or criticism. One question, which is probably at bottom anthropological, concerns the matter of taboos governing what may be said, what may be represented, what may be published. Since Van Wyck Brooks's *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* (and that is now thirty-five years) a great deal has been written about the supposed censorship of Mark Twain's work, either imposed by others or self-imposed. The subject is of primary importance in the study of Mark Twain; at the same time it bears very widely on the recent history of American literature, and on the development of attitudes in the culture generally. But no one knows very much about it. We are at a loss if we ask to what extent the taboos evident in Mark Twain's work are individual idiosyncrasies and to what extent they were actually (as he often maintained) imposed by the culture. It is even more difficult to determine whether these canons of propriety were enforced uniformly throughout the society, or whether they varied according to geographical regions (as Bernard De Voto assumes in his chapter on "Cryptorchism") or according to social classes (as is implied in Santayana's celebrated identification of a "genteel tradition" in America).

The literary historian approaches this problem by examining the fiction published in magazines and books during this period; the correspondence between editors and writers; and book reviews, especially those which comment adversely upon supposed violations of taboos. But the information gathered from these sources needs to be interpreted in the light of a thorough knowledge of class structure, of the stratification of taste according to levels of sophistication, and of the different audiences to which different magazines and publishing houses addressed themselves. I do not believe, for example, that the usual methods of literary history enable us to explain why Harriet Beecher Stowe's "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life," published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1869 under the editorship of William Dean Howells after careful revision by Oliver Wendell Holmes, should have cost the magazine fifteen thousand subscribers—more than one-fourth of its list. The incident suggests that the public which read books (and literary magazines, among which the *Atlantic* enjoyed the highest status) had an appreciably stricter sense of decorum than did Howells and Holmes. The New York *Tribune*, mouthpiece for a larger but still relatively literate segment of public opinion, asserted that *Innocents Abroad* showed "an offensive irreverence for things which other men held sacred." Yet Howells published

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a highly favorable review of *Innocents Abroad* in the *Atlantic*. At the other end of the spectrum of tastes, or of degrees of sophistication, *Innocents Abroad* had an enormous sale among people who seldom read anything except newspapers. Perhaps the exaggerated concern for literary propriety came neither from the extreme highbrows nor from the public at large but from a kind of upper-middlebrow audience defined by the subscription lists of the literary magazines. If there were regional differences among segments of this audience, they have not been clearly defined.

In any event, during the 1870's Mark Twain had a complex problem of adaptation to his various audiences. Howells was introducing him to the world of polite letters through the pages of the *Atlantic*. The canvassers for the American Publishing Company were selling tens of thousands of his books to quite unliterary purchasers. On the lecture platform Mark Twain himself was in direct contact with large miscellaneous audiences—in the Middle West, in the East, and (as early as 1872) in England. He was, in fact, one of the pioneers in the discovery and the formation of the mass audience which is so conspicuous in the twentieth century. In these circumstances, he could obviously not have been the free creative artist in the Romantic mode that seems to have been Brooks's ideal. The autonomy of Mark Twain's works was impaired before they were written, and by forces that were in large part internalized in the author. It does not take us very far to conclude, as Brooks did, that this is a scandal. We must recognize that the inhibitions on literary expression (that is, the demands of various special audiences and of the embryonic mass audience) were a complex trait of the culture in which Mark Twain lived. We need to understand them in order to understand Mark Twain's work. We also need to understand them in order to understand the culture.

Indeed, it may turn out that one of the distinctive fields of American Studies is precisely this ambiguous relation between works of art and the culture in which they occur. Certainly the student of Mark Twain is confronted at every turn with problems arising in this area. Let me cite another example. In his early work, especially in *Innocents Abroad* and *Roughing It*, Mark Twain uses three distinct prose styles. One of these is a vernacular style, based on the everyday speech of men with little formal education—rivermen, stagecoach drivers, prospectors. The second is patterned on the ornate, elevated rhetoric of the pulpit and of political oratory in the manner of Daniel Webster. The third is a direct, unpretentious style representing the impersonal attitude of the skilled reporter. The vernacular style is felt to be appropriate to characters of low social status and reflects various attitudes toward them—sometimes a little patronizing, more often sympathetic and admiring. The elevated style embodies an aspiration toward

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genteel culture, for which indeed it serves as a matrix; it is often used with perfect seriousness, yet is also often burlesqued. The direct style is apparently felt as being neutral, as being somehow outside the hierarchy of classes. The relation of these styles to one another, and Mark Twain's development (never complete) toward an integrated personal idiom, are delicate indices to his perception of distinctions among social classes, of his own place in the status system, and of the status of the audience he believes himself to be addressing.

An examination of these aspects of Mark Twain's style requires a careful discrimination between attitudes toward social status that he has taken over unconsciously from the culture, and attitudes that spring from his conscious recognition of social stratification and of his place within the status system. It is possible, for example, that his most satisfactory style might turn out to depend on his achievement of a personal autonomy—an achievement that was intermittent rather than accomplished once and for all. Furthermore, we have to recognize drastic changes in Mark Twain's relation to the status system at different periods of his career. Especially in the five or six years immediately preceding his marriage in 1870, and for a year or two after it, he shows the signs of rapid upward social mobility, and this movement along the dimension of social status is inextricably involved with his development as a writer. Thus almost concurrently he moved from California to the East coast; he ceased being a newspaper correspondent to become a platform 'lecturer,' a contributor to literary magazines (including the *Atlantic*), a writer of books, and even a dramatist; after several years of a hand-to-mouth Bohemian existence he began to make a large income from his writing; and despite the perfectly rational misgivings of the Langdon family, he married Livy. He made his celebrated efforts at reform by trying to give up liquor and profanity, and to become a Christian as that term was understood in Elmira. He built his expensive house in Hartford. In place of Steve Gillis, Joe Goodman and the members of the San Francisco Minstrel Troupe, he acquired as friends the Rev. Joseph Twichell, Charles Dudley Warner and William Dean Howells. These biographical facts point in two directions: toward American culture (or the varieties of American regional subcultures) at the end of the Civil War, and toward the literary development recorded in Mark Twain's writings. The problem is at once biographical, historical, sociological and literary.

Mark Twain's attitudes toward American society found expression not only in his style, but in the use of recurrent figures or types of character: in his early work, for example, what has been called the vernacular character (most fully illustrated in Huck Finn); in his later work, a figure that might be called the transcendent character (the best illustration being Young

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Satan in *The Mysterious Stranger*). These figures occur in many different guises over a long period of time. They are persistent themes in Mark Twain's writing, and they exert a strong influence on the shaping of plots in his works of fiction, on his imagery and especially on his language (what would *Huckleberry Finn* be if the language were altered?). Both figures embody the author's attitudes toward society, or rather his reading of social situations. The vernacular character is, so to speak, outside society because he is beneath it; the transcendent character is outside society because he is above it. There are strong hints here of Mark Twain's own alienation from the society. His principal problem as a novelist was how to conceive of significant action for characters whose relation to society was so special. The problem was evidently forced upon him by the culture of late nineteenth-century America. It lies at the center of his literary development, yet it cannot be adequately dealt with by literary methods alone. What is needed is a method of analysis that is at once literary (for one must begin with an analytical reading of the texts that takes into account structure, imagery, diction, and so on) and sociological (for many of the forces at work in the fiction are clearly of social origin). Such an analysis would not only take us much farther into Mark Twain's fictive universe than criticism has gone in the past; it would also give us a new insight into American society of the late nineteenth century, for the vernacular figure and the transcendent figure are not peculiar to Mark Twain. They were widely current in American literature and thought; they are cultural, not merely private and individual, images.

The final problem I shall mention that is posed by Mark Twain's career is his relation to the established role of the Man of Letters, the Author, as that role had been defined by New England in the place accorded Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, and so on. This role, one of the massive features of nineteenth-century American culture, was undergoing rapid change during Mark Twain's lifetime, and by the time of his death it had, I think, all but disappeared. In our own day the figure of the Alienated Artist has to some extent taken the place of the figure of the Man of Letters. Mark Twain felt the impact of the social forces that created both the older and the newer role of the artist in America, and at the same time his unprecedented popularity gave tantalizing glimpses of yet another role for the artist—that of the darling of the mass audience, a poker-faced bard whose jokes concealed his Whitmanian function of bringing the great democracy to knowledge of itself. This last possibility was never more than a possibility, but the partial extent to which it was realized defines one dimension of the unique achievement of *Life on the Mississippi*, *Huckleberry Finn* and *A Connecticut Yankee*. After the 1880's the pressures of personal misfortune

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and even more importantly of cultural change prevented this kind of achievement. *Pudd'nhead Wilson, The Mysterious Stranger* and the lesser works of Mark Twain's last two decades are written from the perspective of alienation (an alienation which, it should be pointed out, was accompanied by increasing fame and popularity). To explain the shift in the direction of his development has long been a capital problem of criticism. It is an equally important problem of cultural history, and neither can be solved without full exploration of the other. To find out what was happening to the man and to the society we have to ask questions which lead simultaneously to literary analysis and to analysis of social change.

Yet I must confess that the inquiries I have described are largely hypothetical. The student who tries to explore American culture even in this limited fashion by drawing upon the techniques of literary criticism and of the social sciences soon encounters difficulties.

The difficulties are due in part to the trend of literary studies in this country during the past two or three decades, which has moved away from rather than toward the social sciences. Just recently there are signs of a major shift of direction in literary criticism which may conceivably lead to more interest in the social setting of works of art. Such a change of direction would be most welcome. The techniques of analysis that have been developed by recent literary criticism should ultimately make it possible to deal with the relation between literature and culture at a much more profound level than has been attainable in the past. But change of this sort does not occur overnight, and the dominant force in literary studies is likely for some time yet to continue to be what we are familiar with as the New Criticism. This means that in general, the guiding principle will be a concern for the autonomy of the work of art.

If the New Criticism is about to give way to an even newer criticism, there is all the more reason to acknowledge its solid accomplishments. Like all literary revolutions, the New Criticism proposed to *écraser l'infâme*: it set about purifying criticism from the contamination of everything that was not literary. Again like other revolutions, this one brought with it a remarkable élan. It improved the morale of literary studies. It gave to scholarship and criticism a new penetration and intensity, and it markedly raised the level of literary instruction in American colleges and universities.

But these results were achieved only at a certain cost. The New Criticism has made it extraordinarily difficult to relate literature to the culture within which it occurs and of which it is indisputably a part. From the beginnings of the movement in the work of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, it has borne the imprint of the image of the alienated artist. The cult of pure literature has implied a strongly negative attitude toward society,

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which within this tradition is habitually viewed as irredeemably Philistine and depraved: in Eliot's phrase, a "panorama of futility and anarchy." Although the actual techniques were largely invented and applied by other men, the master image of the movement has been Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and the critical undertaking has been strongly influenced by Eliot's idea of literature as a timeless order of eternal objects. This order he calls tradition, but it is very different from the usual conception of tradition because it is outside time and thus unhistorical or even anti-historical.

The pioneer technician of the New Criticism, I. A. Richards, had a somewhat different set of assumptions—he was at the outset, during the 1920's when he exerted his greatest influence on literary studies, an avowed Benthamite. His effort to state the doctrine of pure literature in positivist terms seems at first glance quite remote from the ideas of Pound and Eliot. But the effect of his teaching was essentially the same. Although he has now modified his original distinction between the statements of science, capable of being verified by empirical tests, and the pseudo-statements of poetry, which seem to be verifiable propositions but actually have no referent outside themselves, it has had great influence. And it separates art from society just as drastically as does Eliot's supernaturalism or Pound's denunciations of the "old bitch gone in the teeth," the "botched civilization."

Despite the sincere desire of some of the leaders in the movement to recognize the intimate relation between a work of art and its social setting, the effect of the New Criticism in practice has been to establish an apparently impassable chasm between the facts of our existence in contemporary society and the values of art. In this respect, the philosophical position of the New Criticism seems to me to bear a striking resemblance to Edgar Allan Poe's conception that art belongs to a non-empirical realm of 'ideality' totally divorced from the sordid or commonplace facts of everyday life. The root of the matter is the belief in an extreme dualism of nature and spirit. If society is taken to be a part of the natural order, and art is assigned to the realm of spirit, it becomes impossible to relate art (except negatively) to the actual culture within which it occurs.

We are no better off if we turn to the social sciences for help in seeing the culture as a whole. We merely find society without art instead of art without society. The literary critic would cut esthetic value loose from social fact; the social scientist, despite his theoretical recognition that art is an important aspect of culture, uses techniques of research which make it difficult or impossible for him to deal with the states of consciousness embodied in serious art.

To a student of literature, the social scientists seem to proceed ordinarily as if certain tangible values inherent in society were the only values that

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need to be taken into account. They find their reality in observed fact, and like all other scholars they have defined facts as the data which their methods of inquiry enable them to discover and record. The extreme form of this tendency is the emphasis on quantification, on the use of data susceptible of statistical treatment. The sociological studies of literature which I have encountered characteristically involve a 'content analysis' of large numbers of works of popular fiction or drama. The assumption on which they are based is, in the words of one such study, that popular literature "can be regarded as a case of 'social fantasy'—that the psychological constellations" in such material "indicate sensitive areas in the personalities of those for whom the work has appeal; their needs, assumptions and values are expressed ('projected')" in the play or novel or short story. Popular literature is used as if it were a body of material resulting from a series of projective psychological tests. This seems to me entirely justified, although I am not sure one can accept Lyman Bryson's contention that "today's popular art did not come out of yesterday's fine art . . . [but] is something developed out of natural social habits and needs by the machine." Popular art is certainly notable for its lack of originality; it is meant to be a homogeneous product identified by brand labels that the customer can count on. Its characters and situations are indeed, as another sociological study maintains, "ubiquitous mass symbols," extremely limited in range at any given moment. The relative homogeneity of popular art lends itself to the quantitative methods of content analysis.

But is nothing of consequence about a culture to be learned from its serious art? I suppose that when we speak of a serious novel, for example, we have in mind a work whose meaning is not exhausted by the identification of stereotyped ideas and attitudes in it. It is serious precisely because it differs in some respects from the mass of popular literature with which it is contemporary and with which, to be sure, it probably has something in common. The serious work has its period flavor but it also has other qualities, and some of these other qualities may be quite unique. Yet what the serious work uniquely expresses is not on that account unreal, or on that account alone unrepresentative. A description of the culture within which this book of permanent interest was created would be incomplete if we left it out of account. Subtract the work of a few dramatists from what we know of Periclean Athens, or of Elizabethan England, and our image of the culture undergoes a drastic change, quite apart from merely esthetic considerations.

The procedures of content analysis do not seem to be adapted to the analysis of works of art differing appreciably from popular art. The content that is analyzed is too rudimentary; it is, again by definition, a factor

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common to large numbers of works, which means a factor that is very far from exhausting the particularity of even a simple work of art. We need a method that can give us access to meanings beyond the range of such a systematic simplification—meanings that are not, so to speak, homogenized. Lacking such a method, the sociological study of the arts will inevitably yield an image of the culture which is truncated. Contemporary American culture is no doubt frightening enough, but it is made unnecessarily appalling by studies of popular art which by implication define the culture without reference to any subtleties beyond the horizon of the mass media. There is more to us than that!

In fact, there is more than that in the sociological findings. Reading the articles in the journals, one may easily forget that after all, the same culture which has produced the soap opera has also produced the sociological journals. Yet if the mass culture is there, so also are the observers and interviewers, the statisticians and the appraisers. Only, they have hidden themselves. The man who conducts the content analysis and identifies the obsessive fantasies in the movies describes a world from which freedom is entirely absent and in which consciousness itself is rudimentary. He silently assumes that he and the colleagues to whom he reports his findings monopolize freedom and consciousness. The mores of his craft (borrowed from the natural sciences) oblige him to conceal his own consciousness behind statistical tables, and he seeks to deny his own individuality by a ceremonial avoidance of the first person. A kind of automation is suggested by these devices of rhetoric: the third person and the passive voice seem to establish as the model of the society a self-contained mechanism from which consciousness has been banished. The scientific observer is outside the field of his observations. He simply makes dial-readings.

I have suggested that the rhetoric of the social sciences seems to reflect an effort to minimize the role of consciousness. This observation can be justly extended to other aspects of the attitude toward language that an outsider encounters in reading current scholarship in these fields. Content analysis of works of literature, for example, requires the investigator to leave entirely out of account the actual words of the individual texts. The content which is extracted for counting and comparison with the content of other texts is detached from its original form of expression and thereafter exists (if it exists at all) in the neutral linguistic matrix of paraphrase. Here again, a procedure which may be suitable in dealing with texts lacking distinction of style is inappropriate in dealing with a serious work of literature. For what can be paraphrased is a small part of the whole meaning of such a work. The range of possible human experiences beyond the limits of paraphrasable meaning is the province of imaginative or poetic language.

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The complex modes of statement which characterize the truly imaginative use of language (and I would be understood here as referring to the different vocabularies of the several arts) are the only instruments we have for embodying and communicating the full content of consciousness.

These more complex meanings are just as real as are the stereotyped fantasies of popular art; in fact, they are more real, because they are more precisely and durably embodied in the medium. And they are part of the culture. A hundred years ago it might have been said that they make up the whole of culture. We believe differently now, and I trust I have made it clear that I have no intention of trying to reinstate a conception of the arts as existing in a separate esthetic realm which contains all values. But I believe the social sciences have reacted too strongly against Matthew Arnold's view of culture. A fully adequate science of society will recognize the existence and the importance of the experiences and attitudes with which Arnold was concerned. And this recognition is possible only for one who is aware of the almost infinite subtlety and complexity of imaginative modes of statement. To recognize no serious and accurate function of language except its use as an instrument of precise denotation is to reduce the scope of consciousness and to deny the significance of whole universes of human experience. The result is a mutilated image of man and of culture.

I have described a situation in which, as it seems to me, the characteristic methods of literary criticism and the social sciences exhibit, each in its own way, serious shortcomings from the standpoint of the enterprise of understanding American culture as a whole. The social sciences seem to me to assume too hastily that all value is implicit in social experience, in group behavior, in institutions, in man as an average member of society. Current literary criticism assumes, also too hastily, that value lies outside society, in works of art which exist on a plane remote from the Waste Land of our actual experience. I have sincere respect for the accomplishments of American scholarship in all these areas, and I recognize that these accomplishments have been made possible only by the rigorous narrowing of fields of inquiry, by the specialization of interests that has been so marked a feature of scholarship in this country during the past half-century. On the other hand, I also believe that the desire to study American culture as a whole, which underlies the nascent movement toward American Studies, has valid motives behind it, and that without disturbing sociologists or literary critics in their important undertakings we can properly ask whether a method can not be found for investigating the whole of the culture.

The concept 'culture' seems, in the abstract at least, to embrace the concepts 'society' and 'art.' Why may we not say quite simply that the problem of method in American Studies can be solved by presupposing a

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value implicit in culture which includes and reconciles the apparently disparate values assumed in the disciplines of, say, literature and sociology? From this point of view, the problem of method in American Studies might seem to find its answer in the already existing field of cultural anthropology. But is this formula more than a verbal solution to the dilemma? The central question is whether cultural anthropology can take account of the full range of meanings available to us in the arts of complex modern societies like our own. From a sketchy acquaintance with some of the scholarship in this field, I gain the impression that when it undertakes the study of complex societies, it tends to resemble sociology, with perhaps a stronger inclination to invoke comparisons between advanced and preliterate cultures. Moreover, cultural anthropology does not seem to differ appreciably from sociology in its assumptions about the relation of fact and value.

I conclude, in short, that no ready-made method for American Studies is in sight. We shall have to develop one for ourselves, and I am afraid that at present we shall have to be content with a very modest program. The best thing we can do, in my opinion, is to conceive of American Studies as a collaboration among men working from within existing academic disciplines but attempting to widen the boundaries imposed by conventional methods of inquiry. This implies a sustained effort of the student of literature to take account of sociological, historical and anthropological data and methods, and of the sociologist or the historian to take account of the data and methods of scholarship in the fields of the arts. I am optimistic enough to believe that inquiries which have their starting-points in various academic departments can converge as they are brought to bear upon a single topic, namely, American culture past and present.

Method in scholarship grows out of practice, or rather out of repeated criticism of practice intended to remedy observed shortcomings. In the inadequacies of answers we have found to our questions we discover clues to the reformulation of the questions, and the reformulated questions in turn suggest new ways of finding answers. If I insist that the development of a method for American Studies is bound up with an effort to resolve the dilemma posed by the dualism which separates social facts from esthetic values, I do not imagine that a new method can be deduced from philosophical premises. A new method will have to come piecemeal, through a kind of principled opportunism, in the course of daily struggles with our various tasks. No one man will be able to redesign the whole enterprise. What will count is the image in our minds of the structure we believe we are helping to build. Such an image will influence a long series of particular decisions, will determine a tendency over a period of time rather than give us a new apparatus all at once.

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From the standpoint of the social sciences the lines of investigation I have mentioned probably seem of limited value because they point to the analysis of specific, individual cases. This is an inevitable consequence of the nature of literary and historical inquiry. But I venture to suggest that individual instances embody whatever uniformities may exist in a culture, and that a really exhaustive knowledge of the concrete case—a work of art, a specific situation, a career—might well lead to the recognition of aspects of the culture which have previously escaped attention. At the very least one might hope for suggestions capable of being formulated as hypotheses and then tested against more extensive evidence. Why is it not conceivable that the masterpiece of literature, or the exceptionally productive career, might turn out to be an expression of the culture in ways beyond the scope of stereotyped examples of popular art or merely average life-patterns?

Afternote

This essay is more or less a prospectus for a book I was preparing to write (published five years later, in 1962, as *Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer*). In rereading the essay I am struck most of all by how far I failed to carry out the program set forth in it. I had only indifferent success in dealing with such topics as literary taboos, or the various audiences Mark Twain addressed, or his relation to the rôle of Man of Letters or Alienated Artist. I came somewhat nearer a definition of the vernacular character in Mark Twain's work; in fact, this turned out to be the principal theme of my book. The effort to explore the relation of his writing to American culture was carried farthest in an introductory chapter on the cult of ideality, another chapter dealing with reactions in the press to Mark Twain's humorous speech at the Whittier birthday dinner in 1877 and an analysis of reviews of *A Connecticut Yankee*. This adds up to something, but it certainly falls short of my hypothetical goal of relating Mark Twain's work to the culture within which it was produced. The task seems to me now even more difficult than I imagined it to be in 1957, but I have not changed my notions about what American Studies should try to accomplish.

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John Higham

American Intellectual History: A Critical Appraisal

AT A CONFERENCE LAST FALL ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN INTELLECTUAL history and American Studies,[1] Russel Nye told a story about the famous baseball pitcher, Satchel Paige. In the later years of his career, Paige was asked how he managed to pitch nine sterling innings at his advanced age. He replied: "Ah jes' stays loose." Nye spoke for most of the attendants at the conference in recommending that the study of American culture "stay loose." Scholars should avoid confining definitions and fixed procedures in the interest of youthful flexibility.

The story itself is characteristically American in its feeling for the openness of experience, the plasticity of life, the success of an ongoing enterprise. The story gets much of its force from our recognition of Paige as an acknowledged champion. He was still winning so many games that his questioner did not worry about why the pitcher lost some of them. Can we have the same confidence in the game of scholarship?

Certainly the study of American intellectual history has, until recently at least, stayed loose. So have the other cultural inquiries that are called American Studies. A philosophy of looseness has, in fact, determined the

[1] Conference on the Historical Study of American Culture, Arden House, New York, October 13-15, 1960. An earlier version of this paper was discussed at the Conference, and I have taken grateful advantage of the criticisms of the other participants in trying to clarify and correct my remarks for publication. Since the general tenor of my argument is unchanged, it does not reflect any consensus among the participants. I am also indebted to the Princeton Council of the Humanities for engaging me in a larger study of American historical scholarship, from which this paper is an outgrowth.

It is necessary to add that I sought deliberately to be controversial—even somewhat polemical—and could not therefore do full justice to all sides of the questions involved. My quasi-historical sketch takes up only so much of the record as seemed immediately pertinent to the issue at hand; and the tyranny of argument did not permit adequate recognition, or even mention, of many scholars whom I greatly admire.

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methods of these fields (although a paradoxical mystique of "integration" has ordinarily supplied their objective). It is doubtful if the record to date justifies us in sharing Satch's confidence in his own limber form. Possibly, writers of American intellectual history have valued looseness too highly. Great historians, like great pitchers, also need fine control.

A little reflection on the ways in which American intellectual history has been written, and on the scholarly traditions from which it has developed, may suggest why Americanists have puzzled and argued so much in recent decades over the nature of intellectual history, and why their general attitude toward it has been so eclectic. A critical review may also show a quiet trend of late toward the clarification of objectives. If such a trend is under way, sympathetic discussion of its problems and possibilities should serve a useful purpose.

So long as the nature of intellectual history remains in dispute, one has to begin with an attempt at definition. No one can hope, of course, to legislate what a subject of study "really" is; but a good definition can mark out an appropriate sphere of interest and thus prevent us from using words unsuitably. Let us say, then, that intellectual history is first of all a branch of history, one variety of a species, sharing the general characteristics that distinguish historical knowledge. As such, it has an overriding concern with how and why particular human experiences have followed one another through time. However much analysis or evaluation an historian undertakes, movement and continuity are his organizing principles, and his competence is limited to a definite span of time. "What aesthetic writers claim a passionate apprehension of form to be to the painter, a passionate apprehension of process is to the historian." [2]

Intellectual history simply applies this way of looking at things to a distinctive subject matter, centering attention on the experiences of thought rather than external behavior. For the intellectual historian, not culture, politics, society or art, but states of mind make up the foreground of interest and the focus of curiosity. This choice of subject matter imposes additional obligations on the intellectual historian. Since every state of mind contains a belief, the intellectual historian—to be responsive to his material—should care a good deal about the acceptableness of beliefs. He should feel the appeal of an idea, and weigh critically its tenability. In that sense, he is an amateur philosopher.

He also functions to some degree as a philosopher in organizing his material. We must assume that the ideas and feelings present in the mind

[2] G. M. Young quoted in C. V. Wedgwood, *Truth and Opinion: Historical Essays* (London: Collins, 1960), p. 95.

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of an individual or group at any given time constitute an interlocking structure, the parts of which are shaped and defined by their relation to one another. Thus, catchwords like nationalism or humanitarianism acquire varying meanings from the general mental outlook of different periods. To understand ideas historically virtually requires some analysis of the intellectual structure in which they were located. The *process* that the intellectual historian studies is movement in, or of, such a system. His achievement becomes more considerable as the magnitude of the system increases, and as it brings an increasing variety of ideas and feelings into meaningful relation. The largest distinctive aim of the intellectual historian, therefore, is to describe and explain the spirit of an age.[3]

This was also the traditional objective of intellectual historians. The few men who wrote the history of thought in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries held substantially the above conception of their task. From W. E. H. Lecky and Leslie Stephen to V. L. Parrington and Alfred North Whitehead, intellectual history meant an attempt to trace the development of the inner life of an age or of a people and thereby exhibit the spirit informing its formal philosophies and its practical achievements. This spirit could be discovered by examining a variety of articulate representatives and determining their distinctive "mental habits" or their common "cast of mind."[4] Undertaken in such fashion, intellectual history served as a nineteenth-century substitute for, or supplement to, philosophy. Evolutionary thinkers, unable to find solid ground for their beliefs in any fixed metaphysical system, looked to the course of history for guidance and to intellectual history in particular for a critical understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the ideas around them.[5]

On the methodological questions that became so troublesome later—questions of what qualifies as thought, and how it interacts with events—

[3] Some of the participants in the Arden House Conference objected to the overly unified, monistic implications of the term, "spirit of an age." Some preferred the more relativistic phrase, "climate of opinion." I think it desirable—indeed, essential in large-scale operations—for the historian to strive for unity. To speak of a spirit in an age does not mean that a pervasive presence controls it; or that it has an essence; or that diversity and conflict are less important than agreement in a period; or that any symbolic design an historian constructs will prove illuminating for other purposes or true from other points of view. It *does* mean that life and thought are most meaningful when grasped in patterns. I like the term "spirit" because it implies a kind of energy, whereas "climate" suggests merely a vaporous condition.

[4] W. E. H. Lecky, *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe* (London: Longmans, Green, 1865), I, vi-ix, xvii-xx; John Theodore Merz, *A History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1896), I, 8-14, 25-26.

[5] In addition to the above references, see Sydney E. Ahlstrom's Introduction to Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Transcendentalism in New England: A History* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), pp. xvii-ix.

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the nineteenth-century intellectual historians maintained a serene and deliberate vagueness. These questions did not interest them very much. An organic theory of culture, which they took for granted, decreed that the relations between thought and deed must be intimate; and their own desire to face the great issues of their time in terms of fundamental principles insured that their history would emphasize serious and substantial types of expression, approached from a non-technical point of view. The traditional intellectual historians were usually naïve in their evolutionary assumptions and unrepresentative in their selection of materials,[6] but they did important work on a generous scale with the aid of a clear purpose.

This long established conception of intellectual history broke down after World War I, when the great amateurs who had dominated and defined the subject gave way to men absorbed in particular academic disciplines. Probably the first major change came from the professional historians. They had conspicuously avoided intellectual history. Pledged to a severe conception of scientific "facts," and distrustful of the flux of speculation and opinion, the professionals had thought objectivity compromised outside the field of material events and political institutions. Intellectual history became a subject of professional interest only after James Harvey Robinson and his followers challenged the narrow positivism of their guild.

Robinson's challenge came under the name "the New History," of which intellectual history was to be an important part. Robinson belligerently proposed to make history not only more all-embracing but also more relevant to the interests of contemporary democracy.[7] His reform program raised the hackles of the conservatives in the profession, and the intellectual historians who followed in Robinson's footsteps had to vindicate their academic respectability to distrustful, sometimes even resentful, colleagues. These intramural pressures probably contributed to the New Historians' cautious, down-to-earth approach to intellectual history. Certainly the general ethos of the profession did not encourage them to generalize as freely, or to rise as far above the level of events, as outsiders like H. O. Taylor or even Parrington were doing. A philosophic view of intellectual history found little favor in professional circles. There, Carl

[6] Nevertheless, the range of materials from which they drew was sometimes surprisingly wide. Barrett Wendell's chapter, "The American Intellect," in *The Cambridge Modern History* (New York, 1903), VII, 723-51, touched on law, philosophy, literature, art, science and education.

[7] James Harvey Robinson, *The New History: Essays Illustrating the Modern Historical Outlook* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912).

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Becker—sustained surely by the influence of Alfred North Whitehead[8]—was almost alone in retaining a traditional conception of intellectual history.

If professional considerations inclined the historians toward concrete events at the expense of philosophic breadth, their own program pushed them in the same direction. The disciples of the New History in the 1920s and 1930s were determined to break down supposedly artificial compartments, to integrate thought and deed at every point. They were, in Morton White's phrase, in revolt against formalism.[9] The history they wrote was so very comprehensive that it permitted little sustained analysis of ideas.

A more or less pragmatic outlook also restrained the New Historians from studying ideas systematically. They took a tough-minded, "realistic" view of beliefs, emphasizing environmental contexts. Yet the New Historian could never rest easy on this point. The relation between ideas and "interests" became an insistent problem, to which his own assumptions foreclosed any satisfactory answer. As a realist, influenced by materialistic interpretations of history, he supposed that ideas are functionally subordinate to interests. He usually concluded, as Richard Hofstadter did of Social Darwinism in 1942, that "changes in the structure of social ideas wait on general changes in economic and political life." [10] On the other hand, the New Historian counted ultimately on the life of reason to remake society. So he kept distinguishing between ideas and interests as compulsively as he mixed them together.

Closely related to this concern, and almost as intense, was the second major question that the professionals brought to the fore. How do ideas circulate through the various levels of society? How, particularly, do they move the inarticulate masses? This problem was largely an extension of the other, and gained in attractiveness as a more promising way of formulating and studying the interplay of thought and action. At the same time, the fascination with popular thought suited the temper of the New History in a crucial particular: it made intellectual history democratic. To write a broad-based kind of intellectual history had the charm of linking intellectuals with the common man. The New Historian had the

[8] Becker's outstanding achievement, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), was much influenced by Alfred North Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925). After Whitehead had shown the rationalism of medieval thought, Becker demonstrated the medievalism of rationalist thought.

[9] *Social Thought in America: The Revolt against Formalism* (New York: The Viking Press, 1949).

[10] *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1944), p. 176.

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authority of John Dewey for believing that an undemocratic class structure had kept traditional philosophy aloof from the needs and interests of ordinary people. On the same premise, he might suspect that the older type of intellectual history was aristocratic, and out of tune with the conquering advance of science and democracy.[11]

In spite of the reductionistic character of such views, the joining of high culture with popular thought may turn out, in the long run, to be the most considerable achievement of the new intellectual history and one of the most stimulating developments in historical scholarship during the last generation. Led by Merle Curti and Ralph H. Gabriel, historians showed that the intellectual history of a democratic society, where no class lines set natural limits to the circulation of ideas, calls for close attention to the processes of popular diffusion and intellectual crystallization. Many of our leading intellectuals, Franklin and Whitman, for example, and such popular currents as the pro-slavery philosophy and Jacksonian democracy, can not be understood without connecting an earthy accent and an airy creed. It also became gradually apparent that the tensions between "higher" and "lower" levels of thought can be studied as seriously as their affinities: the ambiguous relations between the intellectual and his audience, or the strains between his basic principles and the popular moods and fashions that impinge upon him. The study of popular thought has increasingly distinguished between cross-purposes disguised by slogans, and has taken account of the gap between highbrows, middlebrows and lowbrows.

The more sharply we distinguish between the various levels of thought, the more difficult becomes the task of connecting them in a single historical design. No one has entirely succeeded in doing so—in uniting, that is, the philosophy and the social psychology of an age, in making its original ideas and its conventional opinions equally alive and meaningful.[12] None-

[11] R. Richard Wohl, "Intellectual History: An Historian's View," *Historian,* XVI (1953), 62-77. Another characteristic statement is Dixon Wecter's "Ideas as Master Switches," *Saturday Review of Literature,* XXXII (August 6, 1949), 64-65. Notice that Wecter's metaphor clearly assigns an instrumental role to ideas: as master switches, they complete an electrical circuit, but the source of energy is presumably elsewhere.

[12] The most revealing line of inquiry running in this direction in recent years has been the mythic approach of Henry Nash Smith and other writers. This approach has the advantage of dramatizing popular thought by rendering all ideas in pictorial terms. Thus, in Smith's *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), the image of the "garden of the world" vividly unites Jeffersonian abstractions with crude notions about increased rainfall. The objective is a kind of analysis "that fuses concept and emotion." This fusion brings the emotions into the foreground of intellectual history without destroying the framework of conceptual thought. But the conceptual side of intellectual life becomes largely a vehicle for the affective side. So the problem of relating systematic to popular thought has become in our time a problem of relating rational to irrational ideas.

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theless, attempts to relate these levels of thought seem essential if history is to retain its ancient claim to wholeness and its standing as a unifying discipline. We honor the New History because it maintained this claim, and even reinvigorated it; but its zeal for wholeness outreached its integrative power. The intellectual history born out of the revolt against formalism had the virtue of bringing ideas at various levels into juxtaposition; but the resulting amalgam also incorporated so much else that the distinctive character of intellectual history was overborne. The New History had so sharp a repugnance for compartmentalization, and so strong a desire for comprehensiveness, that many of its disciples did not care greatly about intellectual history as such. They valued it more as an instrument for interpreting the multifarious doings of men—as a means of generalizing political and social phenomena—than as a subject with its own intelligibility and importance. In quest of a pragmatic synthesis, the New History tended to squeeze all ideas into a matrix of events and institutions.

I conclude, then, that an instrumental approach to intellectual history—a desire to *use* it rather than to *possess* it—raised crucial methodological issues but left them unresolved; brought intellectual history into the mainstream of professional historical interests, and into relation to general American history, but dissipated the force and coherence that the older intellectual history had had at its best; inspired an abundance of useful research but a paucity of interpretations of the spirit of an age; made us critical of the functioning of ideas, but deterred us from penetrating to their essence.

Not only in intellectual history, but also in its whole attitude toward the past, the New History prescribed an external view of historical data. Aligning itself with the social sciences, the New History treated human experience as comparable to natural phenomena, from which the observer seeks to detach himself as completely as possible. Ever on guard against subjective entanglement in this supposedly external reality, historians maintained a critical stance toward it. In attempting to objectify the past, they could not participate in it wholeheartedly, identify themselves fully with its inmost feelings through imaginative sympathy, or internalize its thoughts. Their theory was more suitable for "unmasking" ideologies, exposing "rationalizations," or analyzing "propaganda."

Did the study of intellectual history follow a different course outside the ranks of professional historians? During the twenties, thirties and forties, men in several disciplines, with a variety of scholarly commitments, were discovering intellectual history and adapting it to their own purposes. Because of their professional background, teachers of

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literature, religion and philosophy, and general cultural critics like Lewis Mumford, could be expected to have a deeper interest in ideas and values than the traditions of the historical guild permitted. One might expect, therefore, that these nonprofessionals would uphold—against the New History—the older view of intellectual history as a subject of intrinsic importance.

To some extent, this happened. One thinks, for example, of Parrington's sense of the sweep and range of ideas, and perhaps of his vivid intellectual portraiture too. In another discipline, Ralph Barton Perry wrote the older type of intellectual history; so did Perry Miller.[13] In view of the enormous proliferation of humanistic scholarship during these decades, however, it is remarkable how few Americans wrote broadly and effectively about the movement of ideas through time.

Two obstacles stood especially in the way. For one, the pragmatic, anti-formalist attitude characteristic of the New History also influenced many scholars in other disciplines. Many historians of literature, religion and other subjects felt the same distrust of abstractions, the same desire to bind ideas closely to practical life, the same subordination of thought to action. Another obstacle was the particular criteria built in to each of the academic disciplines concerned with the history of thought. Scholars wearing various academic allegiances were trying, with the aid of intellectual history, to overcome compartmentalization, but the standards and objectives of their own disciplines could not be given up. Consequently, the history they wrote was usually more technical and less truly historical than the work of the great nineteenth-century amateurs. In many cases both obstacles interfered simultaneously with a coherent view of intellectual history: authors who superimposed the pragmatic, comprehensive spirit of the New History upon an underlying commitment to a particular discipline were perhaps trying to realize too many objectives at once. Consider, for example, Joseph Dorfman's *Economic Mind in American Civilization* (5 vols., 1946-59) and Herbert Schneider's *History of American Philosophy* (1946). These were major achievements; but their attempt to deal comprehensively with ideas in social context, combined with their commitment to the technical criteria of a single discipline, prevented the attainment of a meaningful synthesis.

In radical opposition to the New History was the school of Arthur O. Lovejoy. This school had a genuinely historical interest in the intrinsic

[13] See Perry's *Puritanism and Democracy* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1944), and Miller's *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1939).

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character of ideas, a sublime disregard of instrumental considerations, and a determination to approach intellectual history without respect to the limits of individual disciplines. Yet here too we can observe the loss of a large view of intellectual history under the pressure of a particular academic commitment. A technical philosopher, fascinated by the method of logical analysis, Lovejoy taught a scholastic, mechanical kind of intellectual history, largely detached from a living culture. As one critic has remarked, Lovejoy spoke constantly of cutting into, breaking up and isolating ideas:[14] operations more appropriate to a post mortem than to a parturition. Lovejoy brought an unprecedented precision to intellectual history, but he did so at the expense of a unifying vision. In lesser hands, his method of fine discriminations became a purely academic exercise, and his influence on the whole probably worked to atomize intellectual history at a time when other forces were also blurring its outlines.

Lovejoy's impact on the study of American thought was, however, peripheral. Very few professional philosophers since World War I have had much interest in American intellectual history; and none of them has illuminated it as brilliantly as Santayana and Dewey did in their early essays on the Genteel Tradition (1911) and the influence of Darwinism (1909).[15] American sociology has had no Max Weber; American political theory has had no formidable historian.[16] Undoubtedly this is due in some measure to the antihistorical turn that much contemporary thought has taken since World War I.[17] At any rate, history in general and American intellectual history in particular aroused only sporadic interest outside the two disciplines most directly concerned: history and literature. We must, therefore, look closely at the field of

[14] R. W. B. Lewis, "Spectroscope for Ideas," *Kenyon Review*, XVI (1954), 313-22.

[15] "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy," in *Winds of Doctrine* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), pp. 186-215; *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1910).

[16] Eighteen years ago a student of American political theory pointed out the sterility and poverty of his colleagues' historical labors. Making allowances for some recent distinguished exceptions, the indictment has remained largely true. Benjamin F. Wright, "Research in American Political Theory," *Research in Political Science*, ed. Ernest S. Griffith (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), pp. 178-81.

[17] In the nineteenth century, historical theories and knowledge were opening new horizons in every field of humane learning; and until the 1920s men of the stature of Santayana, Whitehead and Parrington wrote intellectual history with the object of clarifying current issues. In recent decades, however, original thinking in the social sciences, philosophy and literary criticism has gone more largely into analytical problems abstracted from the dimension of time. Whether an increasingly vigorous engagement with intellectual history may help to reverse the decline of historical consciousness in American culture remains to be seen.

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literary scholarship to understand how intellectual history has fared outside of the historical guild.

In dealing with American intellectual history, literary scholars since the 1930s have been guided by the American Studies movement. It has enjoyed an influence comparable to that which the New History had on professional historians. Indeed, the two movements were strikingly similar. Each of them represented a protest against narrowly specialized horizons. Just as the New Historians wanted to go beyond the orthodox kind of political history, so the professors of American literature who were usually the prime movers in establishing American Studies programs[18] were trying to break out of the orthodox kind of literary history. One group appealed for integration of ideas and events in a comprehensive view of the past; the other called for integrated study of art and society in a comprehensive view of "culture" or national character. Both hoped to link that past to the present—one in pursuit of reform, the other in search of identity. Both groups turned to intellectual history not because it was a natural focus of their respective endeavors but because it seemed an appropriate way of synthesizing heterogeneous materials. Thus the New Historians readily joined hands with their literary colleagues in sponsoring American Studies.

One result of American Studies, therefore, was to perpetuate the loose, indefinite conception of intellectual history that came out of the earlier revolt against formalism. Whereas the New History encouraged a pragmatic attitude toward ideas, American Studies was eclectic and experimental. In both cases the study of intellectual history gained in popularity and diversity, somewhat at the cost of coherence. Hostile toward compartmentalized knowledge and too diffuse in aim to maintain a consistent interest in ideas, most American Studies enthusiasts levied upon intellectual history for every purpose except its own.

In spite of the similarities between the New History and the American Studies movement, the latter brought a different emphasis into the writing of intellectual history. American Studies derived from its origins in literary scholarship a humanistic emphasis that was foreign to the New History. Robinson, Beard and their followers looked primarily to the social sciences rather than the humanities for support and cooperation. Their principal effort in respect to intellectual history was relating it to the history of politics and society. On the other hand, the stress in American Studies has lain more upon literature and values, particularly artistic ones. This has been an important contribution, offsetting the

[18] Richard H. Shryock, "The Nature and Implications of Programs in American Civilization," *American Heritage,* III (April, 1949), 36.

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rather matter-of-fact approach of the early New Historians. Literary scholars were trained to make the close textual analysis so often essential in grasping a man's thought. The methods of modern literary criticism enabled them to reach the ambiguous feelings and symbolic references that lurk beneath the surface of an historical document. When literary scholars began to apply such methods to materials other than conventional literary sources, they were in fact writing a new kind of intellectual history. This penetration in depth, first fully displayed in Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land* (1950), deserves as much credit as we give to the New History for extending the range of intellectual history.

Yet, in spite of the effort to be interdisciplinary, the demands of a particular discipline exacted their price. Although teachers of American literature produced a tremendous number of books and articles on what American intellectuals have thought and said, the results with rare exceptions were too specifically literary in interest to qualify fully as historical.

In distinguishing between literary and historical interests, I am not endorsing Bernard DeVoto's supercilious definition of the literary mind as the mind least adapted to the utilization of fact.[19] But historians and literary scholars do tend, I think, to select and handle their facts differently. The student of literature, characteristically, chooses data that will get us, as directly as seems practicable, to an act of evaluation. The object under evaluation persists independently, in that we can read it ourselves without the literary scholar's evaluative assistance. The historian, however, constructs his object. Whereas the art of the past exists in its original form, the life of the past is accessible only in the form in which the historian casts it. The historian scores by arranging his facts into a self-explanatory whole; the literary scholar triumphs by enriching his facts, embroidering upon them the speculative insights and poetic images they evoke but do not wholly contain.

Literary criticism, therefore, and even literary history, are fundamentally unhistorical. Since an independent object controls the range of inquiry, the literary scholar is not impelled to give a complete account of how things were, to feel the density of a milieu or to appraise the relative weight of diverse factors in a situation. His explorations of intellectual history sacrifice wholeness for the sake of expressive power. He makes use of a world of ideas selectively, to illuminate a particular text or literary category; but the true historian makes use of texts selectively, to illuminate a world of ideas. Even in a work so authentically historical as *Virgin Land*, an interest in literary forms sometimes domi-

[19] Bernard DeVoto, *Forays and Rebuttals* (New York, 1936), p. 185.

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nates the story of the ideas flowing through them. More often, the avid pursuers of symbols and myths lose sight of any firm historical structure. One can conclude, therefore, that literary scholars made intellectual history functional to art, as professional historians made it functional to action; and like a lady of easy virtue, it slept wherever it had shelter.

So far I have dwelt largely on the period from the 1920s through the 1940s in order to show how the increasing popularity of intellectual history brought a new attention to methods and a confusion over ends. None of the difficulties that appeared then has disappeared in the last decade. A certain amount of confusion is probably inevitable and stimulating. Nevertheless, after the vigorous dispersal of the thirties and forties, intellectual history seems to be renewing its central purpose. If, as I think, a period of experimentation and controversy is passing, intellectual history may be returning—with far greater sophistication—to its traditional aim of discovering and explaining the spirit of an age. Surely the teaching as well as the writing of American intellectual history is more systematic and selective, more sharply focused on general beliefs and major thinkers, than it was a few years ago. None of the leading colleges or universities still offers the shapeless course that used to be called "Social and Intellectual History"; the disorder that Professor H. L. Swint discovered as recently as 1953[20] has markedly diminished.

Probably, one of the most important reasons for this clarification of goals is a more favorable attitude toward intellectual history in the historical profession at large. The pioneering is over; the historical guild has accepted the intellectual historian and respects his work. The old fogeyism that used to breathe distrust of ideas, unless they were treated as so many inert facts, no longer weighs heavily upon us. One still meets commonly the prejudice that intellectual history is "unreal" unless continuously linked to behavior, as if the movement of thought is somehow less free, or less capable of separate treatment, than the movement of other historical structures. But the insights of intellectual history have become so widely accepted into the corpus of American historiography, and so frequently drawn upon by historians primarily interested in other segments of experience, that the intellectual historian can tend his own garden if he wishes.

Another circumstance that is making for a more manageable and definite conception of intellectual history is the revival of American social history, unhappily eclipsed in the thirties and forties. Social history enjoyed a brilliant development in the 1920s through the sectional and

[20] H. L. Swint, "Trends in the Teaching of Social and Intellectual History," *Social Studies*, XLVI (1955), 243-49.

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economic interpretations that Arthur M. Schlesinger, J. Franklin Jameson, Dixon Ryan Fox and Thomas J. Wertenbaker applied, under the influence of Beard and Turner, to its miscellaneous data. But the publication of the thirteen-volume *History of American Life* (1927-48) demonstrated that no adequate analytical scheme had yet been found. In the ideological thirties, social history as such fell into the background, and the livelier young minds turned to an extended kind of intellectual history, confident that an understanding of social history could best be attained in this more inclusive medium. Only recently has social history begun to escape from the embrace of ideology on the one hand and encyclopedism on the other, and to acquire a shape of its own from the quantitative methods and the structural interests of contemporary sociology. This development relieves the intellectual historian from overextended commitments. It also engenders a healthy tension between two different but equally revealing types of historical patterns: the arrangement of ideas into a working system, and the arrangement of people into a functioning society. It is significant that a senior intellectual historian, Merle Curti, should move with fresh vigor into the newer social history, and that a young general historian, writing about slavery, should separate clearly its institutional from its intellectual setting.[21]

These alterations in the scholarly environment have been occurring under the favoring influence of a much larger change in contemporary thought. Since the 1940s pragmatism, and indeed the whole revolt against formalism, have lost their freshness and charm. When Carl Becker in his old age concluded ruefully that there were generalities that still glitter,[22] when awesome destruction taught other intellectuals not to trust the course of history to vindicate their values, when the intractable dilemmas and the narrow range of alternatives in the postwar world came fully home, the disposition to appraise ideas chiefly from the point of view of their practical consequences received a decisive check. The activist temper of the New History, with its emphasis on direct, continual interchange between ideas and interests, fell out of fashion. Now it began to seem important to take stock of our intellectual assets and liabilities, instead of rushing them pell-mell to market.

The decline of a pragmatic approach to thought made for a greater interest in first principles, in values that have some ultimate claim and not a merely instrumental role. The celebrated "return to religion"

21 Merle Curti, *The Making of An American Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959); Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

22 Carl Becker, "Some Generalities That Still Glitter," in *New Liberties for Old* (New Haven, 1941).

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may have failed in other respects, but it certainly roused the secular intellectual to a sympathetic scrutiny of religious ideas. Accordingly, the history of religious thought constitutes one of the outstanding cumulative achievements of American intellectual history in recent years. Just as the modern theological renaissance began before World War II, so the beginnings of a new kind of American intellectual history go back to Perry Miller's Puritan studies in the 1930s and, most explicitly, to H. Richard Niebuhr's *The Kingdom of God in America* (1937). In that book the author confessed that his earlier sociological approach had failed to explain either the underlying unity or the distinctive force of American Christianity. Since World War II the history of religious ideas has almost entirely superseded the old "church history." Moreover, intellectual history is taking on a more integrated character as the search for first principles bridges conventional distinctions between the pious and the profane. R. W. B. Lewis' *The American Adam* (1955), for example, gives a powerful rendering of social ideas by sounding their religious depths.

If all these changes do mean a renewal of the traditional aims of intellectual history, they do not cancel the efforts of the last generation. Literary scholars will undoubtedly continue to explore the relations between ideas and art. Most historians will continue to emphasize the relations between ideas and action. And rightly so. From one point of view, intellectual history must remain contributory to an appreciation and understanding of cultural achievements; from another point of view, intellectual history must remain contributory to that general history in which the whole of an age is dimly perceived. These perspectives still leave room and need, however, for a third point of view, in which neither art nor action, but feelings and ideas, stand in the center of vision.

This is not to say that any intellectual historian can afford to ignore concrete events and institutions. Even the most austere kind of intellectual history should, if it is fully historical, take account of the circumstances in which ideas arise and terminate. But most writers of American intellectual history have, I think, broken loose from the compulsion to refer ideas at every point to a structure of social action. Surely a better understanding of the problem is available if we stand far enough back to see a complex structure of opinion, bearing upon events at certain strategic points or in certain general directions. To understand the encounter of ideas with action in a massive way, we need a systematic view of the ideas.

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To get such a view we seem to be moving, in one sense, toward greater specialization than has been customary. To restore, in the light of modern knowledge, the traditional aim of intellectual history calls for a paradoxical concentration of effort and rigorous training. The "pure" intellectual historian may have to leave the task of synthesis to the general historian, who moves between topical fields without final commitment to any one.

In another sense, however, the writing of intellectual history should become less specialized as scholars work out the complex patterns of thought that stamp a period, a movement or a major thinker. The comprehensive aspirations of the New History and of American Studies encouraged in practice a good deal of fragmentary work. The historians often fragmented ideas to fit them within events, while the literary scholars experimented with fragmentary perspectives. During the decade of the 1940s, 159 articles and 26 books about Herman Melville came out,[23] and perhaps for this reason we still do not have, so far as I know, a good over-all account of his intellectual life. Three years ago Stow Persons ventured the first serious attempt to periodize American intellectual history in terms of a sequence of dominant ideas. Even more recently, Henry May published the first detailed and integrated account, on a national scale, of a single period.[24] The specialized task of intellectual history today is one of constructing general designs.[25]

What part in all of this will the American Studies movement have? Will it too become less experimental and more systematic? In what direction is this possible? Only a rash prophet would hazard an answer to such questions. It seems likely, however, that the unequal partnership between intellectual history and a presumably inclusive interest in American civilization will not endure unless—contrary to my argument—intellectual history stays very loose indeed.

[23] M.L.A. American Literature Group, *Report of the Committee on Trends in Research in American Literature, 1940-1950* (Baton Rouge, 1951), p. 69.

[24] Stow Persons, *American Minds: A History of Ideas* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1958); Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959).

[25] But see a recent statement about intellectual history that is antithetical to mine: Daniel J. Boorstin, *America and the Image of Europe* (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), pp. 43-78, which argues for an unstructured historiography that will reflect the formless homogeneity of American life.

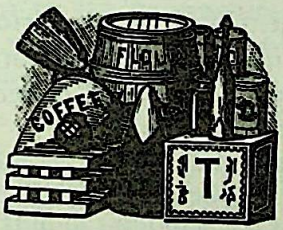
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Afternote

The books and articles of the 1960's reveal little change in the state of scholarship since this paper was written. But the controversies about scope and method, to which I was responding, have certainly lost much of their edge. Accordingly, what I described as a trend "toward the clarification of objectives," and toward a more systematic treatment of ideas, might also be seen as a convergence between hitherto antagonistic scholarly traditions. This is the argument of Robert Allen Skotheim's *American Intellectual Histories and Historians* (Princeton, 1966), an intensive examination of the beliefs of some of the leading scholars from the late nineteenth century to the present. Rush Welter's "The History of Ideas in America: An Essay in Redefinition," *Journal of American History*, LI (1965), 599–614, is another indication that professional historians today tend to favor a middle way between external and internal methods of analysis. Professor Welter declares — wrongly, I believe — that my essay "represents a radical choice" between those alternatives.

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Marcus Cunliffe

American Watersheds[1]

SOME WHILE AGO I BEGAN TO WONDER ABOUT THE NATURE OF THE DIVISIONS that we impose upon the continuum of history. All historians of all countries are forced to make these divisions, as a matter of practical necessity. The bulk of material and the demands of specialized scholarship compel us to define and delimit our own "fields" or "periods." No great uneasiness is involved, for most of us. We turn happily and naturally enough to some particular area—say the fourteenth century, or the eighteenth—and in these instances we do not need to ask ourselves whether the arbitrary division into centuries has more than a provisional validity. Reigns and presidencies, wars and revolutions usually prescribe our boundaries. If they match other, chronological divisions, so much the neater. How convenient that Queen Victoria should have died at almost the exact end of the nineteenth century: though it might have suited the students of Victorianism even better if her death could have coincided with the outbreak of World War I.

Underlying our necessary practice of chopping the continuum into manageable chunks is, of course, a notion that certain dates or episodes are more crucial than others. We assume that this element of decisiveness is real, and not simply a useful fiction, though our terminology to describe such historical moments is neither exact nor very varied. We speak, for example, of "turning points," as though history could be conceived of almost as a force, possessing direction and capable of being deflected from its previous direction by the influence of some major event. Thus in a familiar aphorism G. M. Trevelyan has referred to 1848, the year of revolutions in Europe, as "the turning point at which European history failed to turn." And in his book *Chance or Destiny*,[2]

[1] A revised and enlarged version of a paper originally read at the joint A.S.A.-A.H.A. meeting during the A.H.A.'s annual convention in Chicago, December, 1959.

[2] Oscar Handlin, *Chance or Destiny: Turning Points in American History* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1955).

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Oscar Handlin analyzes eight "turning points" in American history with reference to the blend in each of accident and predestination. A somewhat different concept, a kind of optical metaphor, is offered by Karl Jaspers. In his *Origin and Aim of History* he postulates an *Axenzeit,* or focal point in time, at which the rays of the historical situation converge and from which they then spread out again.

More commonly we adopt a geographical metaphor and talk of historical "watersheds." According to the *New English Dictionary,* the word in English probably derives from the German *Wasserscheide,* or waterparting. In its original German and English usages it signified "the line separating the waters flowing into different rivers or river basins; a narrow elevated tract of ground between two drainage areas." The "shed" or "parting" came to be known also as the "divide": hence the Continental Divide in North American geography. As a historical metaphor the word represented a dramatic division between two areas of time. Unfortunately, by extension, "watersheds" have also been taken to describe "the whole gathering ground of a river system"—its basin or catchment area or whatever else we like to call it. It is hard therefore to be quite sure what historians have in mind when they allude to a "watershed." Do they envisage a crest separating one age from another? Or are they thinking of some large area which receives and eventually canalizes everything that falls within it? I shall return later to the ambiguities of the metaphor. For the moment, we may perhaps assume that historians use it to denote a dramatic and decisive historical dividing line, metaphorically akin to the geographical Great Divide of North America. If the term is vague it is undeniably valuable, and certainly historians in Europe employ it fairly often.

My concern, however, is with "watersheds" in the American past. Here are a few instances of the word where I happened to come across it in the writings of present-day American scholars. Many others could be cited. The first in a random sample relates to 1789, which is cited as a "watershed year" by Eugene H. Roseboom in his *History of Presidential Elections.*[3] Moving on one year, Richard B. Morris believes that Alexander Hamilton's "notable state paper, his Report on Public Credit [1790], constitutes a watershed in American history." It marked, he says, "the end of an era of bankruptcy and repudiation. At the same time it exposed a deepening cleavage between the Hamiltonian nationalists on the one hand and the proponents of states' rights, now championed by Madison."[4] I find that I myself, in a recent little book in the *Chicago*

[3] Eugene H. Roseboom, *A History of Presidential Elections* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1957), p. 1.

[4] Richard B. Morris (ed.), *The Basic Ideas of Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1957), p. 232.

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History of American Civilization series, rather tentatively proposed the decade of the 1830s as "some sort of watershed in American history." [5] In another book published during 1959, Avery O. Craven argues (with some mixture of metaphor) that

> The years from 1844 to 1850, which ultimately produced the Wilmot Proviso and the Compromise of 1850, form something of a watershed in the history of the democratic process in the United States. Before that period, there had been considerable creaking and jolting, but the undercurrent was strongly national and few seriously entertained the thought of disruption.[6]

After 1850, Mr. Craven contends, the American atmosphere was quite otherwise.

Not surprisingly, the same thing has been said about the Civil War. Thus, to Bruce Catton,

> The Civil War was the continental divide of American history, the summit line beyond which everything was to be different. . . . For the Civil War set this nation on the course it has followed ever since. The time before the war is part of the distant past; the time since it is, somehow, the beginning of the present. This was where the great change took place.[7]

Then, among the closing years of the century, the sociologist David Riesman sees the presidential election of 1896 as "an historic watershed: the high point of oligarchic rule." [8] Henry Steele Commager, in his *The American Mind,* treats the whole decade of the 1890s as "the watershed of American history":

> On one side lies an America predominantly agricultural; concerned with domestic problems; conforming, intellectually at least, to the political, economic, and moral principles inherited from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. . . . On the other side lies the modern America, predominantly urban and industrial; inextricably involved in world economy and politics; troubled with the problems that had long been thought peculiar to the Old World; experiencing profound changes in population, social institutions, and technology;

[5] Marcus Cunliffe, *The Nation Takes Shape, 1789-1837* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 183.

[6] Avery O. Craven, *Civil War in the Making, 1815-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 69-70.

[7] Bruce Catton, "Where the Great Change Took Place," *New York Times Magazine,* reprinted in *The American Review,* I (Summer, 1961), 5.

[8] David Riesman *et al., The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 236.

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and trying to accommodate its traditional institutions and habits of thought to conditions new and in part alien.[9]

Writing of subsequent eras, other historians have had recourse to the same metaphor. Frank Freidel says of the New Deal of the 1930s that it "achieved major shifts in the relationship between government and society which have permanently altered the American way of life. From the perspective of a quarter century and more, it seems one of the great watersheds of American history." [10] Arthur Schlesinger Jr. agrees with Freidel: "The age of Franklin Roosevelt is a watershed in the history of the United States, the great dividing line in the nation's life between innocence and responsibility." [11] And the same notion is present in various interpretations which do not actually allude to a "watershed." Henry F. May, in *The End of American Innocence*, says: "Everybody knows that at some point in the twentieth century America went through a cultural revolution. One has only to glance at the family album, or to pick up a book or magazine dated, say, 1907, to find oneself in a completely vanished world." He goes on to speak of a "historical boundary," a "barrier," a "line," and maintains that: "At some point, if not an instantaneous upheaval, there must have been a notable quickening of the pace of change, a period when things began to move so fast that the past, from then on, looked static."[12] For Mr. May the crucial years of this boundary, barrier or line are from 1912 to 1917. Finally Richard

[9] Henry S. Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880's* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 41. The same thought is to be found in the editors' introduction (by Henry S. Commager and Richard B. Morris) to George E. Mowry, *The Era of Theodore Roosevelt, 1900-1912* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1958), p. xii: "the real watershed of our history can be located in the decade of the nineties." Consider also these observations from Richard Hofstadter, "Manifest Destiny and the Philippines," in Daniel Aaron (ed.), *America in Crisis* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), pp. 173-74: "The taking of the Philippine Islands from Spain in 1899 marked a major historical departure for the American people. It was a breach in their traditions and a shock to their established values. . . . The acquisition of the islands, therefore, was understood by contemporaries . . . , as it is readily understood today, to be a turning-point in our history. . . . It is often said that the 1890's . . . form some kind of a 'watershed' in American history."

[10] Frank Freidel, "The New Deal," in Richard W. Leopold and Arthur S. Link (eds.), *Problems in American History*, (2d ed.; Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1957), p. 626.

[11] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Age of Roosevelt*, Vol. I: *The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), p. ix. See also Vol. III, *The Politics of Upheaval* (1960), p. 385: "The year 1935 marked a watershed. In this year the strategy and tactics of the New Deal experienced a subtle but pervasive change."

[12] Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time, 1912-1917* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), pp. ix, 303. A similar date, though from a quite different viewpoint, is proposed by Maxwell Geismar, *American Moderns* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1958), p. 68: "Although literary history doesn't watch the calendar, the year 1919 was a breaking point in American life. It marked the end of an epoch of social reform which had sprung from the populist and pro-

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Hofstadter, though he too has not been obliging enough to use the actual metaphor, discusses great changes in his *The Age of Reform*, and appears to believe that these trends in American experience came to a climax with the beginning of World War II.[13]

What general observations are we to draw from this brief list? We might amuse ourselves by compiling a schedule of, say, the ten chief watersheds in American history. But that would be only a parlor-game, fascinating but ultimately pointless and even misconceived, like the comparable choice made some years ago of the ten greatest presidents of the United States. It would tell us more about ourselves than about the watersheds (or presidents) we happened to select.

Or we might be led to inquire more closely into the whole problem of these allegedly critical episodes in history, following the example set by Oscar Handlin's *Chance or Destiny*. In so doing, we might look more sharply at our professional tendency—a tendency not confined to Americanists—to employ them as the terminal rather than as the central features of our books. If they are so vital, instead of relegating them to rhetorical endpapers ought we not to place them right in the middle of the text, so as to examine what their causes and consequences were? There has been a welcome development here in various American works which do not call an abrupt halt at 1865 and Appomattox, but go on at least as far as 1877 in order to see what happened when the battlesmoke was replaced by the cigar-smoke of lobbies and conference rooms.[14]

Or we might ask ourselves whether "watershed" is not a very bad historical metaphor. In its principal usage, does it not—unlike the term "turning point"—imply a too fundamental discontinuity between a remoter and a more recent past? Does it not conjure up a picture of events flowing away in radically opposite directions, or of some crisis-hump isolating the historical cismontane from the historical transmontane?

Clearly that is not the author's intent in some of the instances quoted. Nor, I believe, is it the intent of most European historians when they find themselves reaching out for this handy cliche, although their own national histories have not been lacking in dramatic and even catastrophic changes of direction. But I believe that it *is* the intention of some Americans. When they speak of a watershed or great divide this is what

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gressive movement at the turn of the century. It opened a decade of social anarchy under the mask of 'normalcy'—of pleasure seeking and private gain, of material success and trivial moral values."

[13] Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 326.

[14] For example, the two-volume text by T. Harry Williams, Richard N. Current and Frank Freidel, *A History of the United States* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959).

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they mean to mean. The assertion is not true, I would suppose, of Mr. Morris' reference to Hamilton's report of 1790. I think he merely wishes to indicate that the report was a remarkable document which had important consequences. I know that when I spoke of the 1830s as a "watershed" I was only trying to indicate a transitional period in American history (and, incidentally, to discover a satisfactory way of concluding my book: the rhetorical endpaper fashion once again).

In the example from Avery Craven the matter is in doubt. He says only that the 1840s were "something of a watershed." Yet in his book he argues that a profound change took place during those years. The "Modern Era" was born and America was never the same again. Bruce Catton is certain of the importance of *his* watershed; and with Henry S. Commager we are, equally, left in no doubt. For him the 1890s form not *a* watershed but *"the* watershed" of American history,[15] and he is at pains to develop the idea of a Great Divide. "On one side" lies the old America: "On the other side lies the modern America." Arthur Schlesinger Jr. is equally firm in his conviction that the age of Franklin Roosevelt is *"the* great dividing line[15] in the nation's life." For Henry F. May, whose subtitle is *The First Years of Our Own Time,* "our time" is separated by the years 1912-17 from "a completely vanished world." Richard Hofstadter is no less positive in his comments on the later 1930s:

> The beginning of the war meant that Americans, with terrible finality, had been at last torn from that habitual security in which their domestic life was merely interrupted by crises in the foreign world, and thrust into a situation in which their domestic life is largely determined by the demands of foreign policy and national defense. With this change came the final involvement of the nation in all the realities it had sought to avoid, for now it was not only mechanized and urbanized and bureaucratized but internationalized as well.[16]

Of course we could make something of the fact that each of these four historians, from Commager to Hofstadter, recommends a different date for the Great Divide. In a strict sense they cannot all be correct, though one of them might be. But I fancy that none would quarrel ferociously with the others over their preferences; and in any case, much of the material in Hofstadter's book deals with the upheavals described by the others. In other words, all of them deal with the twentieth century (if we may stretch our century back as far as 1890), and all insist that fundamental changes separate it and us from the nineteenth century. This is a widely held view, supported by much evidence, including

[15] My italics.
[16] Hofstadter, p. 326.

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a number of studies of changes in the American character during the past half-century.[17]

There is no need to recount all this evidence, some of whose main features are summarized in the quotation from Hofstadter. One can indeed construct a strong case for the argument that American life began to alter profoundly toward the end of the nineteenth century, and that the novelty and collective weight of such change had a more startling effect in the United States than did comparable movements in European life, at the same period. Oscar Handlin has suggested that the very notion of the "watershed" (though he does not call it that) dates from this period. Immigration and industrialization combined, he maintains, with a loss of belief in progress and in the American historic mission to introduce a new pessimism into American thought—especially the thought of those Americans of older stock who now felt dispossessed. So they took refuge in nostalgia, in the half-comforting, half-dismaying idea that *their* America had disappeared at some definite moment which Handlin labels the "cut-off point":

> The depressions of 1893 and 1907 had each evoked widespread fears that all American history to that point had come to an end, and that a new era was about to begin. Strikes . . . produced similar predictions. Through much of the thinking about the end of the frontier and through much of the argument about conservation ran the same frightening thoughts. Sometimes . . . these speculations located the cut-off point in the future rather than in the past or present. . . . Stories about the ruin of old civilizations or about the forthcoming end of the world appeared frequently in the popular magazines and on the shelves of the booksellers. . . . [T]heir central incident was a cataclysm, a violent terminus to the peaceful historical process.[18]

Looking backward, Handlin says, Americans of this period fastened upon a variety of "cut-off points." For some it was the Civil War. Henry

[17] Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* has as its subtitle *A Study of the Changing American Character*. William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956), discusses the shift from an "individuated-entreprencurial" to a "welfare-bureaucratic" society. This formulation is made to serve in works such as Daniel R. Miller and Guy E. Swanson, *The Changing American Parent* (New York: John Wiley, 1959).

[18] Handlin, *Chance or Destiny*, p. 206. The shock of mass immigration is stressed in Nathan Glazer, "The Immigrant Groups and American Culture," *Yale Review*, XLVIII (Spring, 1959). Glazer contends (p. 392) that "while the relatively homogeneous American culture of the middle of the nineteenth century was, like all the other national cultures of that period, seriously affected by the rise of modern industry, . . . mass immigration added something additional to the destructive impact. . . . The break between the culture of the 1870's and that of the 1920's was thus greater in the United States than it was in England or France."

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Adams, for whom catastrophe was a hobby, picked out the thirteenth century, or, within his own lifetime, picked out 1844 (as Avery Craven has done more recently). Writing retrospectively, in the early twentieth century, Adams asserts that in that year 1844

> the old universe was thrown into the ash-heap and a new one created. He and his eighteenth century, troglodytic Boston were suddenly cut apart—separated forever—in act if not in sentiment, by the opening of the Boston and Albany Railroad; the appearance of the first Cunard steamers in the bay; and the telegraphic messages which carried from Baltimore to Washington the news that Henry Clay and James K. Polk were nominated for the Presidency. This was in May, 1844; he was six years old; his new world was ready for use, and only fragments of the old met his eyes.[19]

Adams's friend, the Bostonian Henry Cabot Lodge, indulged in similar speculations when he came to write his autobiography. Lodge was born in 1850, twelve years after Adams:

> The fact was that the year 1850 stood on the edge of a new time. . . . I have often said . . . that there was a wider difference between the men who fought at Waterloo and those who fought at Gettysburg or Sedan or Mukden than there was between the followers of Leonidas and the soldiers of Napoleon. This is merely one way of stating that the application of steam and electricity to transportation and communication made a greater change in human environment than had occurred since the earliest period of recorded history. The break between the old and the new came some time in the thirties, and 1850 was well within the new period. Yet at that date this new period was still very new, . . . and the ideas of the earlier time . . . were still felt, still dominant. The men and women of the elder time with the old feelings and habits were, of course, very numerous, and for the most part were quite unconscious that their world was slipping away from them. Hence the atmosphere of our old stone house, with its lane, its pear-trees, and its garden-nymph, indeed of Boston itself, was still an eighteenth-century atmosphere, if we accept Sir Walter Besant's statement that the eighteenth century ended in 1837.[20]

If America began to change so drastically in the 1890s, and *if* Americans like Adams and Lodge began to project their dismay both backward and forward in time, and *if* the pace of change has continued to accelerate ever since, then perhaps there is not much left to say. "Watershed" may

[19] Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1918), p. 5.

[20] Henry Cabot Lodge, *Early Memories* (New York: Scribner's, 1913), p. 16.

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be a bad metaphor. But then all metaphors are inexact; and since they are indispensable to historians as well as dangerous, why not choose an abrupt metaphor to signalize abrupt change?

I think there *is* something left to say. To begin with, we must recall that not all present-day American historians seem willing to locate *the* watershed in or after the 1890s—and "in or after the 1890s" itself covers a fairly long stretch in American history, perhaps too long to be properly considered as one era. Some writers, such as Avery Craven and Bruce Catton, would apparently push the date back considerably earlier than the 1890s. Allan Nevins, for instance, reinforces Bruce Catton:

> The old Pilgrim chronicler Nathaniel Morton, relating how the founders of Plymouth had taken leave of Europe, committed themselves to a fateful experiment, and by hard labor triumphed over their first trials, concluded that from their last estate they were forever parted: "If they looked behind them, there was a mighty ocean which they had passed, and was now as a main bar or gulph to separate them." When Americans in 1863 looked back a short three years, they saw that they were separated from their former world by a stormy ocean, and that an impassable chasm shut them off from their earlier history.[21]

Possibly we may concede that there may have been not one but several fundamental changes in the history of the United States. But if so, this is an important concession. It suggests that we ought not to enter such ambitious claims for the "watershed" quality of any one particular period or episode. If there have been several breaks, we may wonder whether any one of them imposed as dramatic a discontinuity as its historians would maintain.

Again, we may wonder whether Oscar Handlin's comments on the 1890s, illuminating though they are, explain the whole story. It is surely significant that observers like Adams and Lodge, conscious of and disturbed by the movements of their own middle years, nevertheless went back a half-century before the 1890s to find the source of the upheaval. Nor was there any novelty in this sort of puzzled backward glance. Nathaniel Morton used the ocean metaphor because it had a literal application; yet it is equivalent to a "watershed" metaphor. Before long the "jeremiads" or admonitory sermons of colonial New England, with a different emphasis, were in effect depicting some watershed or cut-off point—some cleavage, that is, between an early American innocence

[21] Allan Nevins, *The War for the Union*, Vol. II: *War Becomes Revolution, 1862-1863* (New York: Scribner's, 1960), p. 482.

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and a latter-day depravity.[22] There is an interesting anguish of exaggeration, which goes beyond mere political partisanship, in the indictment of Thomas Jefferson's policies by a pamphleteer of 1808:

> Everybody will recollect, for it is but a few years since (so rapid has been our progress from infancy to decay) when this country stood on a proud eminence. Its dawn of existence was like that of Hercules, and its maturity promised to be like his. But the *poisoned garment* was thrown over her at an early age, and her premature strength has been followed by a premature old age and second childhood.[23]

This is typical of a whole mass of assertions, throughout American history, that a wondrous opportunity has been ruined, that a golden age has been tarnished, that the old ways have disappeared or that they offer no useful guide to a newer generation. It is of course not a continuous, undifferentiated cry of woe but an ambiguous affair, half-lament, half-boast, as Martin Chuzzlewit might have discerned:

> "You have come to visit our country, Sir, at a season of great commercial depression," said the major.
> "At an alarming crisis," said the colonel.
> "At a period of unprecedented stagnation," said Mr. Jefferson Brick.
> "I'm sorry to hear that," returned Martin. "It's not likely to last, I hope?"
>
> Martin knew nothing about America, or he would have known perfectly well that if its individual citizens, to a man, are to be believed, it always *is* depressed, and always *is* stagnated, and always *is* at an alarming crisis, and never was otherwise; though as a body they are ready to make oath upon the Evangelists at any hour of the day or night, that it is the most thriving and prosperous of all countries on the habitable globe.[24]

In other words, there is an almost inherent American tendency to believe that one has been cut off decisively from the past as if by a physical barrier. The tendency has three main elements. First, it is a consequence of the undeniable *fact* of continuous and rapid social change, since the origins of settlement. This process has, understandably, revealed itself in regrets and neuroses as well as in pride and exuberance. Second, the tendency is rooted in the constant American determination

[22] See Perry Miller, *The New England Mind from Colony to Province* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), esp. pp. 27-39.
[23] John T. Danvers, *A Picture of a Republican Magistrate of the New School, Being a Full Length Likeness of His Excellency Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States* (New York, 1808), p. 56.
[24] Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (London: Macmillan, 1954), p. 259.

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to repudiate Europe—Europe equated with the Past, in contrast with America as the Future—and so to lose the Past altogether. Third, the tendency is a consequence of the American sense of a society which is uniquely free to choose its own destiny. This sense of mission, of dedication and of infinite possibility, in part a fact and in part an article of faith, has led to acute if temporary despairs, to suspicions of betrayal and the like, as well as to more positive and flamboyant results.

It may be objected that the wistful vision of a golden age is by no means an American monopoly. Eden and Arcadia were ancient inventions. Nearly six hundred years ago, in his poem *The Former Age,* Chaucer sighed for the dear dead days before mankind began to worry and scheme and amass wealth:

> A blisful lyf, a paisible and a swete
> Ledden the peples in the former age.

And in *Gulliver's Travels,* Dean Swift harks back to a vanished England of sturdy yeomen: an England which has given way to the evils of sophistication. Nostalgia—a mild emotional indigestion which comes from the attempt to eat one's cake and have it too—was as noticeable in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe as in America. Someone has remarked that Englishmen in the Railway Era became fond of novels in which the fastest form of transport is a stagecoach. And the disquiet which Oscar Handlin notes in the America of the 1890s had very similar manifestations in contemporary England: a yearning for the romantic past on the one hand, and on the other an outcrop of novels about a future war, with pessimistic titles such as *When All Men Starve.*[25] Here too, continuous and rapid social change, though less evident than in the United States, encouraged an interest in watersheds.

But the American repudiation of Europe and the American sense of mission helped to differentiate the American versions of watersheds and golden ages from those of Europe. For instance, the American golden age is not distant in time or place. It is tantalizingly near at hand. The pamphleteer of 1808 could feel that he had either just been in it, or that—if only the Republicans could be swept from office—it might yet be created in the immediate future. There might still prove to be an antidote for the poisoned garment. Later generations of his countrymen could react similarly. All these elements account for an apparent paradox: that American history, though in actuality it has had a surprising degree of continuity when compared with most European nations, has nonetheless been accompanied by a surprisingly prevalent American

[25] Charles Gleig, *When All Men Starve* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1898). I am preparing a study of these accounts of imaginary wars.

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belief in national discontinuity; whereas these European nations have been able to combine actual discontinuity—revolutions, new constitutions, broken regimes, renamed streets and squares—with a *belief in their own national continuity*. True, they have sometimes accomplished this by performing a sort of national amnesia—like the Germans in relation to their Nazi interlude. But this is a different matter from the American feeling of isolation from the past.

If these opinions of mine are valid, then it can be argued that American historians (and sociologists) along with the rest of their countrymen tend to exaggerate the cataclysmic nature of the crises in American history. Obviously, their motives vary. One understandable, and laudable, temptation is for the historian to portray his own subject as dramatically as possible. So a crisis or controversy becomes by degrees *the* crisis, *the* controversy, *the* watershed in American history. The temptation is all the greater when the protagonists of whom the historian writes are themselves convinced that they are involved in an unprecedented and tremendous drama: the drama of choices that *is* a genuine and enormously interesting feature of American history. There is, too, the undeniable fact of fantastic change in both the internal and external aspects of America. The historian may naturally enough be led to contend that change *is* American history, just as the sociologist may be led to conclude that nothing has remained the same. I suspect that no other nation has produced so many books about itself with the word *New* somewhere in the title; and with good reason. But not with entire justification. Much alters: some things do remain the same, or transform themselves quite slowly.[26]

It should be said that recent historians like Arthur Schlesinger, Henry May and Richard Hofstadter are not talking in simple terms of a lost golden age, of a past regrettably shut off. For them "the end of innocence" is the beginning not of *depravity* but of *responsibility*. Schlesinger speaks of the age of Franklin Roosevelt as "the great dividing line . . . between innocence and responsibility." Hofstadter deals brilliantly in *The Age of Reform* with this very fallacy of a pristine, bygone America:

> we may well sympathize with the Populists and with those who shared their need to believe that somewhere in the American past there was a golden age whose life was far better than our own. But actually to

[26] See for example Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 306-13, which suggests that some of the problems of urbanization that we tend to regard as recent were already troubling cities like Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and St. Louis more than a century ago. The sprawl of suburbs, the loss of the sense of community, the growth of summer and weekend retreats: these are apparently ancient aspects of American life.

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> live in that world, actually to enjoy its cherished promise and its imagined innocence, is no longer within our power.[27]

These are sophisticated historians. Even so, they may be yielding a little too readily to the old American habit of asserting that yesterday is shut off from today.

But if change is not quite the whole of American history, the problem of measuring and interpreting it is a major task for historians of America. To use clumsy metaphors of watersheds and turning-points is to miss out a great deal. If we must use analogies, they should be more precise—like, for example, the axiom in the physical sciences that quantitative change produces qualitative change, by degrees: the steady addition of one calorie at a time to a liquid will eventually turn it into a gas. Another way of putting this is to say that change is a constant feature of Western society generally, and of American society in particular. The change generates all kinds of responses: nostalgia, alarm, pride and so on. The nostalgia and alarm are possibly greater today than ever before in American history. But they are not entirely novel. The historian can best show that he understands American attitudes, instead of merely typifying them, by analyzing some of the many aspects of changes in the nation's evolution. Indeed, some of the best recent work in American history has been along such lines. Richard Hofstadter's idea of the "status revolution," and its effect upon respectable citizens at the end of the nineteenth century, is one instance.[28] A similar thesis has been employed by David Donald to explain the motives of the generation of abolitionists that came to maturity during the 1830s:

> Social and economic leadership was being transferred from the country to the city, from the farmer to the manufacturer, from the preacher to the corporation attorney. Too distinguished a family, too gentle an education, too nice a morality were handicaps in a bustling world of business. They were an elite without function, a displaced class in American society.[29]

This explanation has been criticized; and indeed it does not seem to fit the 1830s as convincingly as the 1890s. There is clearly a danger that such theses may be rashly applied, once they are in fashion. "Status

[27] Hofstadter, p. 326. And see Robert Allen Skotheim, "'Innocence' and 'Beyond Innocence' in Recent American Scholarship," *American Quarterly*, XIII (Spring, 1961), 93-99.

[28] Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, chap. iv: "The Status Revolution and Progressive Leaders."

[29] David Donald, "Toward a Reconsideration of Abolitionists," in *Lincoln Reconsidered* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), pp. 33-34.

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revolutions" may need to be rationed as carefully as "watersheds": otherwise they may form a continuous procession in American history. Yet would that not in a way be a correct statement of American social evolution? To explore the shifting balances of American society, and the stratagems of which those who feel dispossessed avail themselves, is to discover a whole field of historical interpretation.

Henry Nash Smith, Marvin Meyers, John W. Ward and other scholars have, by related but somewhat different routes, provided us with remarkably valuable ways of reinterpreting American experience.[30] Older interpretations tended to be organized round certain large polarities: America *versus* Europe, West *versus* East, industrialism *versus* agrarianism and so on. Recent scholarship admits the existence of these polarities and may even suggest as Leo Marx does, that "the dialectical tendency of mind—the habit of seeing life as a collision of radically opposed forces and values—has been accentuated by certain special conditions of experience in America." [31] But Smith, Marx and the rest do not visualize these collisions primarily between opposed groups of men, but rather as contradictory ideals and desires, held simultaneously and uneasily within the mind of the single individual. Very broadly, these opposed aspirations represent the tug between past and future: between primitivism and progress, wilderness and settlement, simplicity and multiplicity, "Arcadia" and "Enterprise." [32] To assume that the polarity is so to speak *internalized,* a dilemma in the individual minds of men as diverse as Andrew Jackson and Henry Adams, is to see American history in a new light. It is to understand more clearly what Longfellow may have been thinking about, in this final example, which nicely illustrates both the idea of the watershed, and the American uncertainty as to which side one would prefer to inhabit. Longfellow's poem, "The Two Rivers," begins:

[30] See for example, Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950); Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957); John W. Ward, *Andrew Jackson: Symbol for an Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

[31] Leo Marx, "Two Kingdoms of Force," *The Massachusetts Review,* I (October, 1959), 84. Marx maintains that "the contrast between the two cardinal images of value, the machine and the native landscape," dramatizes "the great issue of our culture."

[32] The "Arcadia-Enterprise" ambivalence of some Jacksonians—for instance—is made explicit in William N. Chambers, *Old Bullion Benton* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1956), and in Charles G. Sellers Jr., *James K. Polk, Jacksonian, 1795-1843* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). It is studied, for a later period, in David W. Noble, *The Paradox of Progressive Thought* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958). And see Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1955).

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Midnight! the outpost of advancing day!
The frontier town and citadel of night!
The watershed of Time, from which the streams
Of Yesterday and To-morrow take their way,
One to the land of promise and of light,
One to the land of darkness and of dreams!

The final stanza declares:

It is the mystery of the unknown
That fascinates us; we are children still,
Wayward and wistful; with one hand we cling
To the familiar things we call our own,
And with the other, resolute of will,
Grope in the dark for what the day will bring.[33]

Afternote

Looking back on my article, I feel it ends rather lamely and inconclusively. However, it perhaps performed a small service in drawing attention to 1) the commonness of the habit, especially among historians, of assigning "watersheds" to several different points in American history; and 2) the tendency to think of oneself as cut off from the past by some decisive "watershed."

Whether many scholars have taken note is another matter. There are signs of a new interest in problems of continuity and discontinuity in history. One example is *Change and Continuity in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. John Braeman, Robert H. Bremner and Everett Walters (Columbus, The Ohio State University Press, 1964). Though I would not claim to have had any perceptible influence on this movement, one article in *Change and Continuity*, "The Great Depression: Another Watershed in American History?" by Richard S. Kirkendall, appears to use my essay as a starting point.

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[33] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Poetical Works* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1886), III, 213-15.

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Bernard Bowron · Leo Marx · Arnold Rose

Literature and Covert Culture

BY COVERT CULTURE we refer to traits of culture rarely acknowledged by those who possess them. In any society men tend to ignore or repress certain commonly learned attitudes and behavior patterns, much as an individual may ignore or repress certain personal experiences or motives. In the case of covert culture, the repressed traits are more or less common to members of a society, and they probably are transmitted in the same informal ways that the basic elements of the overt culture are transmitted. The covert traits are not more "true" or "real" than the overt traits; they are equally representative of people's attitudes and behaviors. The distinction lies in the degree of acknowledgment (to self and to others) and the degree of repression. If one were to suggest to a representative member of a society that his behavior, or that of his community, exhibits a particular characteristic of covert culture, he might be expected to scoff at the idea, and even reject it heatedly. Public responses to the Kinsey Report are a case in point. Similarly, Americans might deny the evidence of their disguised hostility toward machine technology which we present in this essay.

How then is covert culture recognized? We may assume we are in the presence of covert culture when we note a recurrent pattern of inconsistent or seemingly illogical behavior.[1] When most people in a given society or sub-society adhere to inconsistencies in their actions, when they resist with emotion any attempts to reconcile their actions with their expressed beliefs, and when they persist in this behavior over an extended period of time,

[1]This technique for observing covert culture has been presented in Arnold M. Rose, *Theory and Method in the Social Sciences* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), chap. xxi, "Popular Logic in the Study of Covert Culture." Some elements of covert culture in the United States are suggested in this chapter.

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then presumably we are dealing with covert culture. For obvious reasons, however, it is difficult to study covert culture. And in a heterogeneous society like our own, where variations in behavior are relatively common, it is unlikely that much of our culture long remains covert. On the other hand, the little that does may be of the greatest importance in certain emotionally charged areas of behavior, such as racial or sexual relations or religion.

At this point it might be well to indicate what covert culture is not. In the first place, it is not a whole, complete culture that exists beneath the surface of the overt culture and "really" directs people's attitudes and behavior. It consists, rather, of parts of culture that happen to be seriously inconsistent with other parts of culture and so get driven underground.

Second, behavior in conformity with covert culture is not the same as alienation from culture (or "anomie," to use Durkheim's term). Covert elements of culture are just as much part of culture as overt elements. While behavior in conformity with an element of covert culture is inconsistent with respect to an element of overt culture, such inconsistency might also result from conformity with two incompatible elements of overt culture, although this disharmony would not be so extreme. Logical incompatibility between two elements of culture is likely to manifest itself frequently in a society based on heterogeneous traditions or in a society that is changing rapidly.

Third, covert culture is not a sub-culture. We are all familiar with the different roles that one plays in the various groups to which he belongs: contrast the behavior of the adolescent in his family and in his peer group. But, while members of each group are shocked or scornfully amused by behavior in the other group, they recognize each other's existence and—in a sense—regard the discrepancies as natural and even desirable. The adolescent himself is aware of the disparity in his roles, whether or not it creates a conflict for him. Even the sub-culture of a minority group (such as, for example, the Mennonites or Jews) is in no way to be equated with covert culture. This is a different culture from the dominant one, practiced by a small section of the society, and while it may be deliberately hidden from the majority, its deviations from the dominant culture are quite well known and apparent to those living in both the minority group and the larger society. Sociologists call those living in two societies "marginal men"; they are understood to be fairly rare in any society. Covert culture traits, on the contrary, are exhibited by the large majority of persons in a society if not by all of them.

But it may be asked how covert culture is learned, if it is unacknowledged and secret. The question, however, implies that the transmission of *overt* culture is deliberate and rational. Actually, only a small part of the education

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of the young in the overt culture of a society is deliberate. While the child learns through language or other symbols such as gestures, most of the process is very subtle. As Hickman and Kuhn point out:

> Few, if any, fathers or mothers take their children aside and say, in effect, "I will now tell you what I know," "I will now tell you what you ought to know and believe," or "I will now tell you about our society and our culture." Any conversations of this general nature could have relatively little over-all influence on the child's attitudes. "Attitudes are caught, not taught."[2]

This is true for both overt and covert culture. The difference lies not in manner of learning, but in the degree of the adult's awareness of the cues he is emitting, or in the degree of his willingness to acknowledge the cues when they are called to his attention. One characteristic of this learning process is that the child picks up the cues of the covert culture, but at first does not know that they are "secret." He proudly displays the just learned trait openly in behavior or speech, and then the parent is shocked. This negative reaction—coming once or several times—now teaches the child that he must "forget" and "deny" this part of what he has recently learned from the parent. It should be pointed out, however, that the difference between covert and overt culture is a relative matter; some aspects of covert culture are talked over by intimate friends, as it were "over the back fence." Adults "teach" other adults some aspects of covert culture just as they teach children other aspects.

Those who are probably in the best position to study a society's covert traits are observers who come to it with the perspective of an alien culture. Hence anthropologists and perceptive foreign travelers have until now provided much of the evidence of covert culture. The anthropologists have most frequently analyzed the concept itself.[3] This would suggest that the concept is most useful when direct impressions of a living culture are available. The study of covert culture does not at first thought seem possible through the

[2] C. Addison Hickman and Manford H. Kuhn, *Individuals, Groups, and Economic Behavior* (New York: Dryden Press, 1946), p. 30.

[3] The anthropologists have concerned themselves more with the tendency of culture to form patterns or systems covertly rather than with the relationship of covert culture to behavior. See, for example: Edward Sapir, "The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society," in E. S. Dummer (ed.), *The Unconscious: A Symposium* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928), Clyde Kluckhohn, "Patterning as Exemplified in Navaho Culture," in L. Spier, A. I. Hallowell, and S. S. Newman (eds.), *Language, Culture and Personality: Essays in Memory of Edward Sapir* (Menasha, Wis.: Sapir Memorial Publication Fund, 1941), pp. 109-28; Laura Thompson, "Attitudes and Acculturation," *American Anthropologist*, L (1948), 200-15. A few sociologists also have worked with the concept of covert culture: F. Stuart Chapin, "Latent Culture Patterns of the Unseen World of Social Reality," *American Journal of Sociology*, XL (July, 1934), 61-68; Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1949), pp. 21-81.

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analysis of written documents; hence the concept seems irrelevant to the study of past societies about which we have few other sources of evidence. It is our purpose here to suggest a means of uncovering elements of covert culture through the analysis of written, and particularly literary, evidence.

Now, to be sure, there is nothing new about the idea of studying literature as a source of information about culture. Historians have been doing it for a long time. When allowances are made for shifts in style and taste, the manifest content of literature may be assumed to reflect important characteristics of culture. But what about covert culture? Since we assume, to begin with, that most members of a society do not care to be reminded that they exhibit traits of covert culture, it follows that the writer who seeks a sizeable audience will not knowingly portray them. On the other hand, popular literature may be studied for what it betrays as well as what it depicts. In other words, it may be approached as a projection of covert culture. Such an approach to the arts is well established in several areas. Psychologists have for some time been using graphic and lingual expression to get at the unconscious associations of individuals. Of these projective tests, the Rorschach, TAT and Word Association test are perhaps the best known. Similarly, literature widely accepted by the public, or a significant segment of the public, may provide an avenue to the unstated ideas of a society. Of course the Freudians and Jungians have studied literature, but not precisely in the way we are suggesting. They have sought recurring popular themes in the classics as projections of what they consider to be universal instincts or complexes. They are concerned with the traits common to virtually all men. What we are concerned with, on the other hand, is a technique for dealing with certain distinctive characteristics of a particular culture located in time and place.[4]

The projective component of written documents is chiefly to be found in imagery and metaphor, using metaphor in the broadest sense to include all the more common figurative modes of expression. When a writer uses such analogizing devices, in which the analogy is either explicit or implicit, he is in effect revealing a pattern of association which can only be partly conscious. That is to say, no matter how many reasons he may acknowledge for selecting a particular figure of speech, the fact remains that he selects it

[4]Although the Freudians have characteristically been most concerned with universal rather than particular cultural traits, Freud himself did suggest the possibility of inquiries along the line of this essay. "The analogy between the process of cultural evolution and the path of individual development may be carried further in an important respect. It can be maintained that the community, too, develops a super-ego, under whose influence cultural evolution proceeds. It would be an enticing task for an authority on human systems of culture to work out this analogy in specific cases." *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. Joan Riviere (3rd ed.; London: Hogarth Press, 1946), p. 136.

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from a virtually infinite range of possibilities. Therefore no degree of deliberate calculation can fully explain his choice. For example, why does an author choose a machine to express menace; why not a storm or an earthquake? We are of course not concerned here with idiosyncratic quirks of personality. Our interest is limited to images and metaphors which recur frequently in the written expression of a particular society. We do not have in mind the mere cliché or faddish expression, but rather the metaphor *repeatedly used in varying language* to describe similar phenomena.[5] We shall provide an example below.

First, however, a word must be said about our apparent tendency to favor more stereotyped modes of expression. It is true that the more unreflective the creative process, the more useful the work may be as a projection of the psyche, so to speak, of the entire society. But this is not to say that we underestimate the value of less hackneyed literary modes. We conceive of written documents as distributed along a spectrum from the most stereotyped or conventional at one end to the most original and perceptive at the other. The great writer is a sensitive observer, and needless to say, he does not merely project his culture. On the contrary, often he consciously reveals covert elements that less perceptive artists ignore; moreover, he sometimes reveals them precisely by turning stereotypes inside out. Hence this distinction between overt and covert culture should not seem completely unfamiliar to students of literature. Indeed, it is in some respects akin to a recurrent literary motif, the paradoxical relation between "appearance and reality." Not that there is an exact equivalence between the two sets of terms. When a writer indicates the presence of a "reality" hidden beneath "appearances" he usually intends more than we do by covert culture. Nevertheless he often includes an awareness of covert traits. For example, Shakespeare has Lear become aware of covert traits of culture; Cervantes, on the other hand, deliberately makes Don Quixote oblivious of them. In *King Lear* the discrepancy generates a tragic view of life; in *Don Quixote* it is the essence of comedy. In both works, however, the reader's illumination comes at least in part from the author's revelation of the disparity between what we have called overt and covert culture. That disparity is, however, but one aspect of the paradox of appearance and reality.

For an illustration of the use of written documents to reveal covert patterns, consider American culture during the onset of industrialism before the Civil War. Here, as most historians testify, was a society whole-heartedly

[5]While popular clichés have some interest to the social scientist, they are to be thought of as habits of speech (e.g., "pretty as a picture") rather than as unconsciously selected projections of covert culture, so that mere recurrence of metaphor is not a sufficient criterion. What is to be sought is a metaphor or image that is expressed recurrently in *varying* language and used to describe the same set of phenomena.

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committed to the idea of progress. This was an era of unprecedented expansion, social mobility and optimism. In the newspapers, magazines and orations of the time we find countless celebrations of the new technology as emblematic of man's increasing dominion over nature. Take, as an example, a minister's address to the New York Mechanic's Institute in 1841. In expounding his theme ("Improvement of the Mechanic Arts"), the Reverend Mr. Williamson employed many commonplaces of the hour. The mechanic arts, he said,

> . . . change the face of nature itself, and cause the desolate and solitary place to be glad and blossom as the rose—the mountains are levelled—the crooked is made strait [sic] and the rough places plain—the ascending vapor is arrested in its upward course and converted into a power that well nigh enables us to laugh at distance and space—the broad Atlantic has become, as it were, a narrow lake. . . . And still the course is onward, and we even threaten to seize upon the forked lightning, and pluck from the faithful magnet a power, that shall render useless the canvass [sic] of the mariner and achieve a yet mightier triumph over the obstacles that space has interposed to the intercourse of man with his fellow-man . . . much of human happiness depends upon the cultivation of these arts . . . without them, man is but a helpless child, exposed to ten thousand dangers and difficulties, that he cannot control; but with them, he is strong, and can rule in majesty over that mighty empire which God has given him.[6]

To say that this rhetoric embodies certain dominant values of the culture is not to deny that there also were outspoken critics of technological innovation. There were. But they constituted a relatively small minority. Some spoke for the slavery interest or the emergent labor movement, others for various religious sects or utopian reform groups. By and large, however, Americans at this time enthusiastically endorsed the new machine power, and even more enthusiastically applied it. Many of the respected leaders of society, men like Daniel Webster and Edward Everett, paid homage to technology in language indistinguishable from Mr. Williamson's. On the basis of the written evidence, therefore, one might conclude that American culture, leaving aside a few groups of partially alienated people, exhibited only approval of industrialization.

But that is not quite the whole story. To be sure, it describes the dominant overt response to mechanization, but it fails to account for a certain contrary undertone that any close student of the period recognizes. To be more specific, in examining a large sample of reactions to technological change in this period, we discover some which defy simple classification. Here, for

[6]Rev. Bro. I. D. Williamson, *The Covenant and Official Magazine of the Grand Lodge of the United States*, I (June, 1842), 275-81. The original lecture was delivered on November 18, 1841. A survey of responses to industrialization was made possible by a grant from the Graduate School, University of Minnesota, and by the research assistance of Dr. Donald Houghton.

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example, is an article by James H. Lanman on "Railroads in the United States," which appeared in Hunt's *Merchants' Magazine* in 1840.[7] In accordance with the spirit of this journal of commerce, the writer presents an affirmative survey of the advance of steam power in America. He regards "productive enterprise" as the distinguishing feature of American culture, and he praises the new machines as "the triumphs of our own age, the laurels of mechanical philosophy, of untrammelled mind, and a liberal commerce!" He finds railroads particularly inspiring; so far as he is concerned "it is clear that all patriotic and right-minded men have concurred in the propriety of their construction." If we confine attention to Mr. Lanman's manifest opinions, we have no reason to distinguish him from such ebullient devotees of progress as the Rev. Mr. Williamson.

Nevertheless a more searching examination of this article uncovers a curious anomaly. In spite of the writer's evident effort to enlist support for the new power, he repeatedly invokes images which convey less than full confidence in the benign influence of machines. Steamships and railroads are "iron monsters," "dragons of mightier power, with iron muscles that never tire, breathing smoke and flame through their blackened lungs, feeding upon wood and water, outrunning the race horse. . . ." Elsewhere Mr. Lanman is eager to allay fear of railroad accidents. Therefore he carefully evaluates statistics on deaths and injuries. He finds the results clearly favorable to railroads as compared with travel on "common roads." At the same time, however, he describes a train "leaping forward like some black monster, upon its iron path, by the light of the fire and smoke which it vomits forth."

In contrast to the manifest theme of the piece, these images associate machines with the destructive and the repulsive. They communicate an unmistakable sense of anxiety and menace. Without more evidence, of course, we cannot prove that the writer actually was uneasy about the new power. By themselves these images prove nothing. But the fact is that we can produce many other examples of the same kind. Moreover, and this seems to us a most telling point, when we turn to these alienated writers who consciously try to arouse fear of machines, we find them deliberately choosing the same images. Robert Owen, for example, describes the new technology as a power "which neither eats nor drinks, and faints not by over-exertion, brought into direct competition with flesh and blood." "Who is there," he asks, "to check this mighty monster that is now allowed to stalk the earth . . .?"[8] It was in this period that a kind of machine created

[7] III (October, 1840), 273-95.

[8] *New Harmony Gazette*, II (August 8, 1927), 347. Owen's words are from an address delivered to the Franklin Institute on June 27, 1827.

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in a writer's imagination entered the language as the prototype of terror and the demoniacal—Frankenstein's monster. A final example of the simultaneous attraction and fearfulness of the locomotive, with distinct Oedipal overtones, is provided by this doggerel:

Big iron horse with lifted head,
Panting beneath the station shed,
You are my dearest dream come true;—
I love my Dad; I worship you!

Your noble heart is filled with fire,
For all your toil you never tire,
And though you're saddled-up in steel,
Somewhere, inside, I *know* you feel.

All night in dreams when you pass by,
You breathe out stars that fill the sky,
And now, when all my dreams are true,
I hardly dare come close to you.[9]

To sum up, we conclude that expressions of the overt culture do not provide an adequate conception of the American response to industrialization. From them we get the familiar picture of a confident, optimistic public and a few small dissident groups. But the concept of covert culture makes possible a somewhat different hypothesis. When we analyze the imagery employed even by those who professed approval of technological change, we discover evidence of widespread if largely unacknowledged doubt, fear and hostility.[10] It is not necessary to our present purpose to account in detail for this phenomenon. Suffice it to suggest that American culture at this time also embraced a set of values and meanings inherently antithetic to the new technological power. This was a time, as everyone knows, when Americans tended to celebrate the "natural" as against the "artificial." At all levels of culture, from the relatively abstruse speculations of Emerson to the popular gift books, from Cooper's novels to the paintings of the Hudson River School, Americans affirmed values and meanings said to reside in nature. Natural process, that is, was conceived as containing the key, barely concealed, to all human problems. Needless to say, this belief was not peculiar to America. But as a consequence of the unique American geography—the actual presence of the wilderness—it did seem par-

[9]Benjamin R. C. Low, "The Little Boy to the Locomotive," in David L. Cohn, *The Good Old Days* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), p. 188.

[10]It is possible that people betrayed their fear of the machine in casual conversation. But this source of information usually is not available to sociologists, much less to historians. If the sociologist asks people directly about their attitudes toward machines, he is likely to get "rational" answers about how much labor they save, how they provide products and services previously not available, and so on.

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ticularly relevant to this country. As Perry Miller has pointed out, what the European romantic dreamed the American actually experienced.[11] Now the progress of technology hardly was reconcilable, at least in the long run, with the sanctity of the natural order. For the use of power machines implied that nature was a neutral if not hostile force that men needed to dominate. This view was in obvious contradiction with the idea that man's felicity depended upon the ordering of life in passive accommodation to spontaneous operations of nature.

We are suggesting, though here we can hardly demonstrate, that this unacknowledged conflict of values may have been an important source of the anxiety revealed by the imagery to which we have called attention.[12] This is not to identify approval of technological progress with overt culture, and hostility with covert. What is covert here results from the impulse to adhere (simultaneously) to logically incompatible values. In other words, it is the awareness of the contradiction that is repressed and that gives rise to the covert traits (in this case *unacknowledged* fear and hostility) revealed in imagery. Thus it is worth noting that Lanman, the writer who praised locomotives even as he called them monsters, also praised the "steam screw" which, he said, "should tear up by the roots the present monarchs of the forest, and open the ample bosom of the soil to the genial beams of the fertilizing sun." Recall that the writer speaks for a culture passionately devoted to nature—to Bryant's lyric view that "the groves were God's first temples." Is it surprising that he felt impelled to compare machines to terrible monsters? In any event, the disparity between the feelings latent in his images and the manifest optimism of his theme is highly suggestive. It gives some clue to the correspondence between this writer's strangely mixed feelings and the recurrent, if largely unexpressed, pattern of inconsistency in the culture of nineteenth-century America.

This interpretation, finally, is borne out by the work of the more sensitive and perceptive writers of the age. When we turn, for example, to Cooper, Thoreau, Hawthorne and Melville we find a reiterated expression of precisely those contradictory meanings the typical magazine writers did not acknowledge. What is more, the great writers in many cases employed the same or similar imagery to get at these conflicts. But with an important difference. When Lanman called a machine a monster he was scarcely

[11] "The Romantic Dilemma in American Nationalism and the Concept of Nature," *Harvard Theological Review*, XLVIII (October, 1955), 239-53.

[12] It is interesting that as early as 1881, Dr. George Miller Beard, an American physician, related the anxiety of Americans to the new technology. His pioneering work, *American Nervousness, Its Causes and Consequences* (New York, 1881), was taken seriously by Freud. See Philip P. Wiener, "G. M. Beard and Freud on 'American Nervousness,'" *Journal of History of Ideas* (April, 1956), 269-74.

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aware of what he was doing. When Thoreau or Hawthorne did the same thing, he was often deliberately complicating the significance of America's favorite symbol of progress. He gave the railroad an ambiguous meaning, not out of any inherent passion for ambiguity, but rather because he worked to convey as much of the meaning of experience as possible.[13] In other words, he grasped the contradiction that Lanman, like many other Americans, refused to recognize. It is no accident, therefore, that serious men of letters in this period so often employ machines in symbolic opposition to various emblems of nature. They thus confirm the presence of those covert traits of culture which unreflective writers merely betray.

Repressed traits and attitudes of former periods need not be a closed book. Dead men answer no poll-takers, but they have left an extensive written record of their underground cultures. This record may be deciphered. One indispensable key is the analysis of systems of imagery and metaphor in diverse popular writings and in works of formal literary art. The sociologist need not regard this method of study as an exclusive possession of the literary scholars who originally developed it. Used with care and discrimination, it is equally available to him.

Such collaboration between literary and sociological scholarship is, fortunately, a two-way street. At least it should be. For the concept of covert culture, in turn, offers a rewarding approach to literary studies. This point cannot be developed here. But it is surely implicit in what has been said about formal literature's significant confirmation of the existence of culture traits that are only revealed inadvertently in popular modes of expression. Critics concerned with the devious ways in which a society nurtures its men of letters cannot afford to neglect the existence of covert culture and the writer's responses to it. Here is a major source of those tensions that give a work of literary art its structure, its irony, and its stylistic signature.

[13] We agree with Henry G. Fairbanks who, in a recent article, disagrees with scholars who regard Hawthorne as a doctrinaire and romantic opponent of science and technology. But, like the writers he criticizes, Mr. Fairbanks tends to misconstrue Hawthorne's aim in mentioning machines at all. Hawthorne was not concerned to convey his opinions about the new technology, but rather to express its meaning, often ambiguous, within the larger pattern of human experience. In doing so, as we have tried to indicate, he revealed contradictions characteristic of American culture generally. See "Hawthorne and the Machine Age," *American Literature*, XXVIII (May, 1956), 155-64. For a somewhat different method of interpreting the response of American writers to the onset of industrialism see, e.g., Leo Marx, "The Machine in the Garden," *New England Quarterly*, XXIX (March, 1956), 27-42; "The Pilot and the Passenger: Landscape Conventions and the Style of *Huckleberry Finn*," *American Literature*, XXVIII (May, 1956), 129-46.

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Afternote

This article is an outgrowth of a faculty seminar on "Technology and American Culture" at the University of Minnesota in which the authors participated. A revised version is included in Joseph J. Kwiat and Mary C. Turpie, eds., *Studies in American Culture: Dominant Ideas and Images* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1960), pp. 84–94.

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Richard E. Sykes

American Studies and the Concept of Culture: A Theory and Method

AMERICAN STUDIES IS YOUNG, AND THUS, INEVITABLY, HAS BEEN UNSURE OF its goals and methods. Part of its uncertainty is due to the skeptical attitudes of some scholars who identify themselves with the older, more respectable and secure disciplines. But despite the matter of prestige, the problem of theory and method is very real. As yet there is no generally recognized theory of American Studies, and thus we do not really know who we are, and what we are doing. There is even disagreement as to whether or not such a theory is desirable at this time. While a number of scholars have suggested theories and methods, others feel that the best procedure is to avoid dogmatic definition of content or method, and to wait for the discipline to define itself through practice. Henry Nash Smith writes: "Method in scholarship grows out of practice, or rather out of repeated criticism of practice intended to remedy observed shortcomings."[1]

While those who suggest that practice must come before theory deserve our respect, especially because of their outstanding practical successes, it seems doubtful to me whether anything is to be gained from the neglect of theory, provided that theoretical suggestions are treated as just that, as suggestions, and not as dogmatic attempts to circumscribe a new and developing field. Theory and definition have the value of clarification, of suggesting useful distinctions and possibly fruitful hypotheses. There comes a point when the justification of a new field must exceed a reaction against the narrow perspectives of either the New Criticism or purely quantitative social science. Nor are the suggestions that the defining characteristic of

1 "Can American Studies Develop a Method?," in *Studies in American Culture: Dominant Ideas and Images*, Joseph J. Kwiat and Mary C. Turpie, eds. (Minneapolis, 1960), p. 14. At the outset I would like to acknowledge my obligation to several who have read and criticized this paper in one or more of its various revisions, though by doing so I do not imply that they necessarily agree with my point of view. Many of the basic ideas were originally developed in a seminar taught by Dr. Brom Weber. I also wish to thank Professors Leo Marx, Arnold Rose and especially Charles Foster. Of course the final responsibility is mine.

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American Studies is "the effort to view any given subject of investigation from new perspectives," or to view it from an interdisciplinary standpoint adequate.[2] Hopefully the student of any discipline will attempt to look at his subject from new perspectives, and an increasing number of studies in both the sciences and humanities are interdisciplinary.

What then is American Studies? Briefly defined, it is the study of American culture. Culture is the key concept, the unifying concept, the root word which suggests both theory and method. It is a branch of culture studies, and as such is closer to the social sciences theoretically than to the humanities. It is a specialized branch of cultural anthropology.[3] The materials studied may be literary, but the approach will be that of the student of culture, not the critic. It is time to recognize this fact openly and to start working out its implications.

The skeptic will now ask: If American Studies is merely a culture study, then how does it differ from other culture studies? Has it any special defining characteristics? Of course the obvious unique characteristic is that it is American. It is concerned with a culture which can be defined according to certain spatio-temporal dimensions. In the long run this will be its only distinguishing characteristic, for if American Studies fulfills its promise, it is highly likely that similar investigations will be undertaken of other national cultures. It will be but a branch of culture studies of modern literate societies.

Many, perhaps most studies by anthropologists have been of nonliterate cultures. In most primitive societies culture is communicated by oral, not written means. Even in high civilizations only a small minority of the population was capable of reading or writing until after the invention of the printing press. Systems of universal free public education organized to transmit culture have been created only in modern times, made necessary by the increasing complexity of modern cultures, and especially by their dependence on specialization and literacy.

American Studies may be the unifying result of trends in both the humanities and anthropology. To the student of the humanities, culture is becoming more and more important. To the anthropologist the written and artistic expressions of modern literate societies are of increasing significance. Redfield writes:

"Regional studies" may have one development into a study not so much

[2] Smith in Kwiat and Turpie, p. 3, and Richard M. Huber, "A Theory of American Studies," *Social Education*, XVIII (October 1954), 267.

[3] This is recognized by William Randel when he writes that "of all established disciplines, cultural anthropology, more specifically social anthropology, is the closest to American Studies in governing purpose." In "Toward a Method in American Studies," *Quarterly Journal of the Florida Academy of Science*, XXIII (Spring 1960), 67.

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> of a region as of a culture: a single localized long-standing way of life composed of a Little Tradition of the nonliterate and illiterate and a Great Tradition of the literate and philosophic few. These two aspects of the one reality are to be found, respectively, in the community study of the anthropologist and in the study of the art and literature by the humanist. The two traditions have made each other . . . and anthropologists are likely to join with . . . other specialists of literature and history in the complete study of these culture-civilizations.[4]

It is not unreasonable to suggest that the co-operative study Redfield foresees may be improved by creating a discipline which combines special knowledge of both culture and humanities. The student of modern literate societies requires special training in the use and interpretation of written artifacts. These include not only such things as government documents, personal diaries and other such usual historical resources, but also literature, for to the student of culture, as contrasted with the historian, it may be more useful in discovering cultural significances than merely descriptive documents.[5] Yet the understanding and proper use of documents of fiction, as of other documents of art, require knowledge, not only of content, but of craft and form. They are documents, but in a very special way. The student of modern literate culture must acquire a considerable special knowledge of the techniques of the high arts as well as of popular culture and mass communication. American Studies as a branch of modern literate culture studies requires a general theoretical orientation to culture study, and additional special knowledge of the written artifacts that are one of the defining characteristics of modern cultures.

The necessity of knowledge of literary technique is especially evident in historically oriented culture research. Unlike the anthropologist who observes the natives of an existing primitive culture, students of historical American Studies must use the surviving documents of a past era. This is one of the reasons it requires knowledge of many disciplines. It is also the reason it seems at times more like one of the humanities. Thus far most effort at inferring the psychological states of past natives of our culture has been centered on written documents. The American Studies student has often confused his concern with written kinds of evidence—especially with great American literature—with American Studies as a whole and its direction. The artifacts from which a culture is inferred include not just written documents, certainly not just literature, but also

[4] Robert Redfield, "Relations of Anthropology to the Social Sciences and to the Humanities," in A. L. Kroeber, chm., *Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory* (Chicago, 1953), p. 737.

[5] See section below, p. 266, for a fuller consideration of the use of literature in culture studies.

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the creations of the other arts, as well as the products of technology and science. The true reason why American Studies is interdisciplinary becomes evident. It is so not just to get a new angle on a traditional subject matter, or to look on an event from several angles, but because the concept of culture around which American Studies revolves cuts across and includes the content of all the other disciplines. These disciplines are, in fact, the means our society uses to communicate a knowledge of culture, and are thus one of the best sources for an investigator of culture.

If culture is the key concept in American Studies, a closer examination of the concept and its uses should be worthwhile.

Of course the meaning of culture traditional in the humanities is not that implied here. It is used here in the sense common to the social sciences, and initiated in English by Tylor in his *Primitive Culture* in 1871.[6] The concept was developed gradually as the many travelers, scholars and merchants of the modern era observed that there were ways of life different from their own. A certain self-consciousness grew regarding ways of life and patterns of living.

Students of culture themselves have by no means been agreed as to the precise meaning of the word. In their monograph *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn include and comment on some 164 definitions. Despite differences in emphasis among definitions the authors suggest that most social scientists would define culture more or less as follows:

> Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action.[7]

Culture is a concept, an abstraction. It is not a thing. In the words of Kroeber and Kluckhohn: "Culture is an abstract description of *trends toward* uniformity in the words, acts, and artifacts of human groups."[8] Culture is not generally considered actual behavior itself, nor need the actual products or artifacts of culture be considered as culture itself. Cul-

[6] Alfred L. Kroeber, "The Concept of Culture in Science," *Journal of General Education*, III (April 1949), 183.

[7] Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Vol. XLVII–No. 1 (Cambridge, 1952), p. 181. Hereafter referred to as Kroeber and Kluckhohn.

[8] Kroeber and Kluckhohn, p. 182.

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ture is that which is constructed by inference from behavior and artifacts. For instance there are a number of works of fiction called novels. None of these is exactly the same, yet they have certain common similarities. They are enough alike to be labelled "novels." The form exists only in its specific embodiments. In one sense the novel form is a culture pattern, a construct, inferred from all its specific embodiments. Ralph Linton makes a similar distinction when he differentiates between real culture patterns and culture construct patterns. Real culture patterns are all the actual novels. Culture construct patterns, which are formulated by students of culture, are the average patterns, the generalizations which describe the mode of specific actual occurrences.[9]

Many anthropologists distinguish between explicit or overt, and implicit or covert or latent culture.[10] There is some difference of opinion as to the exact meaning of these contrasting terms. One reason for the disagreement is that one's definition of covert culture depends on one's definition of culture in general. Linton, for instance, who includes behavior as part of culture, defines covert culture as "a matter of psychological states, and such states can only be inferred from the overt behavior to which it gives rise."[11] Those anthropologists who do not include overt behavior as part of their definition of culture, and to whom "culture" is entirely conceptual, define covert culture as those patterns, significances and values according to which people act, but of which they are unaware, in contrast to those values, patterns and significances on which they act, but of which they are aware. Kroeber and Kluckhohn refer to these covert culture phenomena as *cultural enthymemes*, or tacit premises.

> It looks to an inner coherence in terms of structuralizing principles that are taken for granted by participants in this culture as prevailing in the world. Patterns are forms—the implicit culture consists in interrelationships between forms, that is, of qualities which can be predicated only of two or more forms taken together.[12]

I think they are suggesting that behind two or more culture patterns, which on the surface seem dissimilar, one may find a third pattern, a tacit premise that is common to both. An example of an implicit culture pat-

[9] Ralph Linton, *The Cultural Background of Personality* (New York, 1945), pp. 30-54.

[10] Linton refers to overt and covert culture as do Bernard Bowron, Leo Marx and Arnold Rose, "Literature and Covert Culture," in Kwiat and Turpie, pp. 84-95. F. Stuart Chapin refers to latent patterns in "Latent Culture Patterns of the Unseen World of Social Reality," *American Journal of Sociology*, XL (July 1934), 61-68. Kroeber and Kluckhohn generally use explicit and implicit. See p. 157. A method of detecting covert culture is suggested by Arnold Rose in *Theory and Method in the Social Sciences* (Minneapolis, 1954), chap. xxi, "Popular Logic in the Study of Covert Culture."

[11] Linton, p. 39.

[12] Kroeber and Kluckhohn, p. 171.

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tern might be language. Usually a culture possesses a common language. Few Americans are aware that the patterns and relationships which structure the English language significantly determine how they think about reality, and that certain other languages are structured very differently. The subject-object relationship which is the basis of our sentence structure is not the only one possible. Without being aware of it, all Americans grow up using the same language and thinking about reality in that language, however else they differ.[13]

Because of the rather ambiguous use of the words explicit and overt; implicit, covert and latent among anthropologists themselves, an attempt at definition, clarification and comment for American Studies purposes may be worthwhile.

1) Culture is a pattern of constructs of modes of meanings, values and ideas about acting, inferred from noninstinctive human behavior. Behavior is human action and the products of action. Products of action include written artifacts of historic cultures including documents of all kinds; newspapers, manuscripts, books of fiction and poetry. Among artifacts of culture are paintings, music, sculpture and the products of technology and science.

Culture should be distinguished from society. Society is the group itself. Culture is the meanings, values and ideas about action which are in the minds of the members of a society.

2) A subculture is a group within a larger culture which can be characterized by certain patterns peculiar to itself.

A subculture should be distinguished from a group organized with a particular purpose in mind such as a political party, business, art appreciation club or denomination. These groups may be composed of persons from different subcultures. Usually a culture or subculture is not best described as goal-directed. A culture or subculture is a way of life. In America important subcultures have been sectional, national (immigrant), racial and religious. In 1850 some of the subcultures one could have observed were: Protestant New England, Irish Catholic New England; the Negro, Chinese and Indian; the Jewish, Pennsylvania Dutch and Shaker subcultures. It will be observed that in all cases these "rule of thumb" labels point to what was probably the most popularly obvious characteristic of each group.

3) All cultures are characterized by certain patterns of behavior. These are learned and passed on from generation to generation. They regularize virtually all the areas of life important to the existence of that culture. They involve customs of eating, housing, earning a living, rearing children, marrying, burying and worshiping. There is a certain variation of custom along a continuum. Of course no one event is exactly the same as another,

[13] See *Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*, ed. John B. Carroll (New York, 1956).

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but it is possible to describe what most of the members of a culture do most of the time in most areas of life. From their behavior is inferred the meanings, values and ideas about acting which inform it. From sermons delivered by the clergymen of any one denomination it is possible to derive a kind of pattern of what preachers and congregations expect in a sermon. That which is inferred from behavior or the products of behavior is a *culture construct pattern.* Many times when we speak of a culture construct pattern we shall actually mean a subculture construct pattern, because it is seldom that a pattern, especially before the late twentieth century, will be shared by all Americans.

4) In speaking of culture construct patterns it is possible to distinguish between those which are *avowed, masked* and *metapatterns.* I shall use this terminology to replace covert-overt, explicit-implicit, terms which suffer from considerable ambiguity.

An *avowed pattern* is one which is publicly practiced and expressly recognized by those who practice it. It is usually legal and openly approved. It is not necessarily a majority pattern for there are many minority culture patterns which are avowed. On the other hand a pattern may actually be shared by most members of a majority and not be avowed.

A *masked pattern* has at least some of the following characteristics: It is seldom openly discussed or publicly sanctioned, though it may be admitted in intimate groups. In some cases it is masked because the members of a culture do not realize that it is a generally shared pattern. In some cases virtually all members of a culture may be unaware that any pattern exists, not because it is consciously hidden, but because it is taken for granted. It is too habitual to be noticed. In some cases a pattern may be masked because it is repressed. Members of a culture may feel anxious about a particular danger or threat, but fear to admit their anxiety. Members of a culture may feel a kind of unmet need, but be unable to verbalize it. Often a masked culture pattern exists because it contradicts an already avowed pattern. Masked patterns must often be isolated by indirect means.

It should be emphasized that one makes a judgment of whether or not a pattern is masked or avowed along a continuum. There are no absolute distinctions. In American culture, where there are a number of culture detectives employed full-time, it is unlikely that a great many patterns will be completely masked. In many primitive societies much of the culture is masked simply because it is taken for granted. It should be noted that a pattern is not avowed or masked depending on the observer's point of view. It is avowed or masked according to the attitudes toward it, or the degree to which it is self-conscious among those who practice it.

A *metapattern* is one shared by two or more patterns. It is what has previously been labelled "implicit." The structure of language is a metapattern.

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It is shared by all participants in a culture possessing a common language.

The search for masked patterns and metapatterns is one of the most intriguing and difficult aspects of culture studies. Avowed patterns are usually obvious, though they differ in subtlety. It is an avowed pattern in contemporary American culture for Christians to go to church on Sunday. It is an avowed pattern for a politician to attack another politician or political party in terms which would not be allowed in another context. In the South segregation is an avowed pattern. All of these patterns are publicly practiced and expressly recognized and sanctioned. They are mostly ideas about action, though certain value patterns, sometimes masked, are implicit in them. It is an avowed pattern to seek profit in business or a higher wage for labor. On the other hand certain ways of making a profit are not avowed. We know they exist, but they are masked. In the North discrimination is often masked. If Mr. Kinsey is correct there are many masked sexual patterns. Four books will provide us with brief examples of the search for patterns in historic American culture.

a) *Railroad Leaders, 1845–1890: The Business Mind in Action* by Thomas C. Cochran. From an analysis of the business letter files of some sixty-one presidents of American railroads between 1845–90 the author abstracts norms (patterns) for social role, that is, for "a shared expectation of a general type of response to certain situations." "A primary aim . . . was to establish some norms of thought and attitude for American railroad presidents of the period. . . ." Before the study the author drew up a list of attitude categories including such headings as: expansion of business, competitors, social problems and innovation. In content analyzing the letters every significant expression of the writer's attitude toward those items included in the list was recorded. The result was a profile of the presidents' attitudes on those items. Insofar as many of the men shared similar attitudes on many of the items it is evident that patterns existed. Some of these patterns were avowed and others masked. It is possible that a great many of the attitudes were masked because the presidents may not have realized that what seemed to them private attitudes were so extensively shared by their fellow presidents. They were also masked since they would not have been openly acknowledged either to the general public or to the boards of directors of the railroad companies.[14]

b) *Popular Religion: Inspirational Books in America* by Louis Schneider and Sanford M. Dornbusch. This is a very carefully designed study of forty-six best sellers of inspirational religious literature (nonfiction) in America between 1875–1955. From the methodological standpoint alone *Popular Religion* is of interest to students of American Studies. The

[14] (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 14, 15.

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authors composed a lengthy list of religious ideas. General headings in their list included: functions of religious faith; God, man and nature; changing the self and the world; salvation; wealth and health; ways of salvation. One subitem, for instance, was "religion brings physical health." Whenever this idea appeared in a paragraph of a book analyzed, it was recorded so that when the analysis was completed the proportion of the book devoted to that particular idea could be estimated. "After reading a paragraph, the reader recorded one or more coding categories which were explicitly treated in it." Two readers spent thirteen weeks reading thirty-one of the forty-six books paragraph by paragraph. Half of the books were assigned randomly to each reader. Two of the books were assigned to both readers and their classifications compared, paragraph by paragraph. Out of 212 possible categories both readers chose the same one 66 per cent of the time.[15]

While *Popular Religion* is intended primarily as a study in the sociology of American popular religion, it has considerable relevance to the culture-concept-approach to American Studies, for it locates certain patterns and trends in the minds of many Americans about religion, patterns not at all similar to the formal theology of many traditional churches. Many ideas found in these books are like those found in New Thought and Christian Science. Certainly these patterns are avowed in the sense that many of the authors of these books were well-known clergymen. On the other hand they have a masked quality in that no major denomination and very few responsible theologians would advocate "the power of positive thinking" and similar ideas. Nevertheless these ideas are popular among a large proportion of the American middle class. This study tends to confirm the suggestion of some American Studies scholars that masked patterns may be discovered through the investigation of certain small, seemingly eccentric movements such as New Thought that avow ideas which may be generally masked but still in the minds of many others. An avowed pattern of a small group may lead to a masked pattern in the larger culture.

c) *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* by R. W. B. Lewis. It is by no means necessary for American Studies to be entirely or even primarily concerned with high art, or with "great" American literature. Nevetheless this has been a fascination to many, and some of the frustrating problems of American Studies are a result of this preoccupation. Inquirers have sought patterns in the literature itself and have tried to use literature as an indicator of masked culture patterns. The idea has been that the images and metaphors

[15] (Chicago, 1958), p. viii.

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With his questions or hypotheses in mind, the symbol analyst must outline the technical aspects of his project, determining how to count which symbols in what body of data covering what time period. Objectivity requires that these technical aspects of the symbol analysis be specified in advance, and that throughout the analysis there be strict adherence to the coding procedure. If this requirement is met, an independent research project should be able to verify the findings of a symbol analysis by applying the analyst's coding procedures to the original body of data. If it is impossible or impractical to analyze all the data, the analyst must utilize a sampling technique (about which I shall say more later) designed to produce a representative sample or reproduction in miniature of the entire body or universe of relevant items. A pretest or "dry run" is essential to "indicate whether the prescribed symbol list, coding rules and recording procedures *actually* will produce the statistic wanted." [12] After subjecting a small portion of the sample to analysis, the researcher can often see where he must eliminate and where he must add categories to his symbol list, or where he must make changes in his hypotheses or coding procedures.

How could we test the hypothesis suggested above—that "The colonists' sense of group identification shifted from the British political community to a strictly American political community gradually but steadily from 1735 to 1775"—using symbol analysis? Since one crucial aspect of group identification is the recognition, both by members of the group and outsiders, of the group's existence apart from other such groups, we can examine the use of self-referent symbols in colonial newspapers.[13] To return to some questions suggested above, when did the colonists (or at least their newspapers) stop referring to themselves as "colonists" or as "His Majesty's subjects," and begin more often viewing themselves as "Americans"? When did they begin identifying the land that they occupied as "America" rather than as "British-America" or the "colonies"? Another aspect of group identification is the amount of attention paid by the members of the group to one another, in contrast to the attention paid to outsiders. When did the colonists begin devoting more space in their newspapers to local events and occurrences in America than they did to European wars and English court gossip? A simple count of symbols in the colonial press referring to place names throughout the world would give us substantial informa-

[12] Lasswell, Lerner and Pool, *The Comparative Study of Symbols,* p. 51; italics in the original.

[13] For a discussion of the value and limitations of newspapers for analyzing colonial attitudes, and of some of the problems encountered in content analyzing them, see Richard L. Merritt, "Public Opinion in Colonial America: Content Analyzing the Colonial Press," *Public Opinion Quarterly,* XXVII (1963), 356-71.

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tion about the colonists' focus of attention, and about the changes in this focus as they reached the end of the colonial era.

Clearly a certain amount of expertness in the methodology of symbol analysis—whether, when, what and how to count [14]—is important here. Symbol analysis is after all a research tool which, like any other tool or method, has its specific uses, its advantages and its limitations. The analyst must know how to use this research tool, and must be aware of its limitations. This sort of expertness is akin to that of the student of American diplomatic history who, before he can perform competent research, must be familiar with such research aids as bibliographies and dictionaries of biographies; he must be able to evaluate conflicting interpretations of history or of events; he must learn to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources. The expert symbol analyst, like the expert chemical engineer, strives to clarify his research designs so that even his newest research assistant could carry out at least some of the often tedious testing or counting.

Finally, the analyst must interpret the results of the symbol count in terms of his theoretical framework. That the colonists' use of self-referent symbols changed considerably from 1735 to 1775 is in itself an interesting fact. But where does that fact fit into the development of an American sense of community, the growth of sentiments of separateness from the mother country, the emergence of a desire for independence? It is this relationship—conclusions "formed by means of an inference from observed data to nonobserved continua" [15]—that is the crux of research in the social sciences.

Confronted with the task of analyzing a set of objects or communication media, such as eighteenth-century colonial newspapers, I could follow one of two different procedures. I could, first of all, examine each item individually; or, alternatively, I could use some sort of sampling method to select a few representative items for close examination. The appropriateness of either procedure rests primarily upon the amount and type of information needed to answer my questions about the class of items, as well as upon what economists call the "opportunity cost" of securing a certain amount of information. If I were interested in newspaper reaction to specific events, the Boston Tea Party, for instance, or the Battle of Golden Hill, I would most likely have to analyze every issue of a given number of newspapers for a certain limited time period. But searching for long-run trends in press attitudes or reporting would pose an entirely different research task.

One means of analyzing long-run trends in the press would be to read through every issue published (or extant) for the years in question. This

[14] Lasswell, Lerner and Pool, *The Comparative Study of Symbols*, pp. 45-63.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

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is the time-honored historical method, and has much to commend it. In this manner the alert and insightful scholar can often spot significant relationships in the data that enable him to formulate interesting research problems and to reach useful conclusions.

That his results are important, however, is no guarantee that they adequately represent the actual content of the newspapers. Three critical types of error might have crept into his findings. We may, first of all, ignore the type of error produced by a writer merely searching for statements fitting his preconceived notions about the content of the press. Charlatanism is possible regardless of the research method used. The occurrence of such instances is nonetheless frequent enough to make us wary. A second and more important type of error occurs when the researcher searches through the newspapers for different points of view. It is sometimes difficult to assess the importance of certain ideas or symbols without some sort of frequency count or other measure of intensity. To ignore this is to run the risk of evaluating widely differing ideas or symbols on a par, assigning equal weights to an argument appearing only occasionally and to one appearing constantly.[16] The third type of error falls into the category of simple human failings. To scrutinize every extant issue of the pre-Revolutionary press would consume an inordinate amount of time. The researcher cannot read every word with equal care. He is generally able to do little more than to scan the newspapers, looking for key words or concepts. Even as Homer nodded, so too the modern writer occasionally slips, momentarily gliding by a few words or even paragraphs as the library grows dimmer, the microfilm copy grows fuzzier or the hour grows later. He may judge certain items to be of only marginal interest when in fact their inclusion would be necessary to give a rounded aspect to his final conclusions. Or, still more likely, the categories of items or concepts he considers of marginal interest may vary from day to day.

The alternative is to utilize some method of sampling. The detailed examination of every *n*th issue of a newspaper, or of a certain number of newspapers selected at random for each year, is as useful in measuring long-run trends in attitude changes as a sampling process is in testing blood or the control of quality on an assembly line. Such a procedure eliminates the necessity of scanning large quantities of newsprint as well as errors of the type mentioned in the previous paragraph. The more we can stratify the sample according to some characteristic of the media, according to political sympathies, for instance, or place of publication,

[16] For examples of such an error, see Warren H. Goodman, "The Origins of the War of 1812: A Survey of Changing Interpretations," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXVIII (1941), 171-86.

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or popularity as indicated by circulation, the more refined it will be. But, at the same time, with increasing refinement comes the need for larger sample sizes and hence added expense in terms of the time and money available for research. Ideally, the sample should be small enough to be manageable, and yet large enough to answer the most important questions about the total class of items.

Whether or not a sample is appropriate also rests upon certain empirical tests. One test would be to compare the analysis of the sample with a complete analysis of the larger set from which the sample has been drawn. Since such a procedure would obviate the need of a sample, it would be efficient only if the sampling technique were to be used in analyzing additional bodies of similar data. More frequently it is sufficient to compare the sample with a second sample drawn independently from the same data. If the variation between the two independent samples is not statistically significant, then either could be used within certain limits of probability in analyzing the data. If the variation is significant, then a larger sample, or perhaps one stratified differently, must be used. In my own work on changes in symbol usage in the colonial press, I have found that a random sample of four issues per year of a newspaper is nine-tenths as good as an independently-chosen random sample of twelve issues per year.[17] But, it must be added, although a sample of four issues per year might well measure yearly changes in symbol usage, it would take a more refined sample to analyze changes within any given year.

As a research method symbol analysis is a lengthy process, costly both in time and research money; and, even worse for the person performing the actual counting, an extensive project may become rather tedious. In this sense symbol analysis resembles a large radar network, which is also expensive, time-consuming and tiresome for the person scanning the radar screens. We know that the payoff of the radar net, in terms of national defense, is important. But why bother with symbol analysis? Is the increment in knowledge—about the development of colonial patterns of group identity, for instance—worth the effort involved?

Intrinsically, of course, any increment in man's knowledge that contributes to an understanding of important events and processes is useful. At the very least a symbol analysis of the colonial press would tell us some-

[17] Independent samples of four and twelve issues per year for ten different years were compared, using the nonparametric "Mann-Whitney *U* Test." In nine of the ten cases, the tests indicated that no significant differences between the two samples existed. More properly speaking, in nine of ten cases (significant at the .05 level for a two-tailed test) the test did not reject a null hypothesis asserting that there was no significant difference between the sample of four and the independent sample of twelve issues.

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thing about the changing perspectives of their editors. To the extent that these perspectives reflected and helped to shape the perspectives of the politically relevant strata of colonial society, they are useful in analyzing attitude changes in eighteenth-century America.

There is another side to the use of information derived from symbol analyses. In one sense such data are quite different from the standard materials of American history: they are quantitative in nature, based on standard statistical tests of reliability and verification. The information yielded is both impersonal and repeatable, that is, an independent researcher could get similar results by following the same procedures. In another, very important sense, however, this information is not at all dissimilar from any other piece of concrete evidence used in the study of American history. Its usefulness rests upon its interpretation, upon the pattern of events and processes in which the scholar places it. Like customhouse reports on intercolonial shipping patterns, it is evidence that conscientious scholars cannot ignore.

Trend information produced by symbol analysis encourages us to consider history as a continuing process rather than as sets of discrete events in a time series. This fact bears two important implications for research. First of all, trend analyses permit us to fit single pieces of evidence into continuing patterns, giving us a better understanding of the relevance of the single bits of information as well as enriching our understanding of the patterns. In seeking to answer the question, "When did the colonists begin to perceive themselves as Americans rather than as English colonists?" it is often quite tempting to focus upon single documents or single events—occasions upon which the "Americanism" of the colonists was emphasized—and to point to these occasions as the origin of an American sense of nationality. It is an interesting fact, for instance, that documents (letters, battle reports, instructions) written in the Caribbean during the War of Jenkins' Ear frequently used the terms "Americans" and "Europeans" to differentiate colonial from English sailors and marines, but this fact must be considered not in isolation, away from its environment of other relevant information. It is necessary to compare the actual frequency of such usages with the frequency with which common terms were used to refer to colonists and Englishmen alike, and to see how these frequencies changed over time and with the tide of battle. Moreover, the importance of the fact pales if it turns out that the differential usage of nomenclature was restricted to an area of interaction limited in the number of communicators, the time period covered and geographic circumstances. Did the inhabitants of the British Isles or the North American continent adopt such terms? Or were these names like nicknames given one another by

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children in a summer camp—meaningful at the time, often quite graphic, but soon forgotten when the summer is over? Similarly, how *representative* of more general speech patterns are the statements cited in the writings of others who try to pinpoint in time and place the origin of American nationalism? Did such statements reflect or precede (or even create) a sense of community in the people as a whole? Or were they instances of aberrant or possibly random verbal behavior that found neither basis nor echo in the common language of the day? In sum, an assessment of widely varying points of view about the origins of American nationalism requires adequate information on long-run trends in colonial thinking, the sort of information that symbol analysis can provide.

A second implication for research is that trend data from symbol analyses help us to focus our attention upon years or months of particular importance in the development of American community awareness. If it should turn out that the period during which colonial symbol usage underwent the most radical change was the year 1763 (or, even more specifically, the early summer of that year), then we might do well to commit more of our research resources to an examination of colonial attitudes during that crucial period.

More generally speaking, symbol analysis bears yet another implication for research in the field of colonial history. The training of the top-flight historian, no less so than that of the social psychologist or the political scientist with an interest in communications research, is long and arduous, usually involving a considerable degree of specialization. Can we expect that the historian, having mastered his own trade, will turn to the vast fields of psychology and communications research for further training? There are of course some historians who will do just that. For others, however, the solution may be to encourage interdisciplinary research. The recently developed tools of the social sciences can contribute as much to the study of history as the historian can—by identifying the important and interesting problems in, say, colonial history, as well as the most relevant variables—to contemporary theory in the social sciences.

A systematic analysis of self-referent symbols in the colonial press would tell us much about patterns of nationalism in eighteenth-century America. With this view in mind I examined the news columns of four randomly selected issues per year of newspapers from each of five colonial population centers—Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Williamsburg and Charleston in South Carolina [18]—tabulating each appearance of place-name sym-

[18] The newspapers were: *The Boston News-Letter* (issues from 1735 to 1775) and *The Boston Gazette, and Country Journal* (1762-75); *The New-York Weekly Journal* (1735-51) and *The New-York Mercury* (1752-75); *The Pennsylvania Gazette* (1735-75);

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bols (such as "Boston," "England," "the colonies," "Americans" or other names of actual places or their inhabitants) during the 41 years from 1735 to 1775. The place-name symbols of particular importance here are self-referent symbols referring collectively to either the colonists or the colonies as a single unit. The tabulation includes both direct symbols (that is, those symbols actually specifying the group or the area, such as "the colonists" or "the colonies") and indirect symbols (those that replace the specific name of the group or area with such terms as "they," "that place" and so forth).

The collective self-referent symbols are categorized in two different ways. One means is by their primary identification content: Do they denote the geographic area that later became the United States, or its population? A second means of categorization is according to the specific label, a so-called secondary symbol, that the self-referent symbols attach when identifying the primary content: Do they associate the land or its population with the British political community or with a distinctly American community? In this respect we can differentiate five groups of such symbols: (1) Symbols of explicit British common identity: "British North America," "the English colonies," "British-America," or "British colonists," "British-Americans," "English provincials"; (2) Symbols of identification with the British Crown: "His Majesty's colonies," "royal colonies" or "crown colonies," "His Majesty's subjects in America," "Royal Americans"; (3) Symbols of implicit British common identity: the "colonies" or "provinces," "our colonies in America" (only when used in articles with British datelines), "colonists" or "provincials"; (4) Symbols of implicit American common identity: the "continent" or "country," the "American colonies" or the "colonies in America," the "United Colonies," the "continentals," "American colonists"; and (5) Symbols of explicit American common identity: "America" or "North America," "Americans" or "North Americans." In this paper I shall collapse the first three categories into a single one comprising symbols identifying the colonies and colonists as essentially British, and the last two categories into one of symbols identifying the colonial lands and population as American. Elsewhere I have considered the difference it makes if we categorize self-referent symbols according to whether they appeared in articles with American, British or other foreign datelines;[19] here I shall consider the distribution of symbols only in respect to the total image of the American community presented to the newspapers' readers.

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the various *Virginia Gazettes* (under William Parks from 1736 to 1750, and under William Hunter and his successors from 1751 to 1775); and *The South-Carolina Gazette* (1735-75).

[19] See Richard L. Merritt, *Symbols of American Community, 1735-1775* (New Haven, 1966).

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The first point to be noted about the distribution of collective self-referent symbols in the press is that their salience increased dramatically in the years from 1735 to 1775. In the late 1730s, the newspapers as a whole paid little attention indeed to the colonies or colonists as a collective unit. The average issue contained .66 such symbols, that is, in every three issues of a newspaper approximately two self-referent symbols appeared. This figure represented somewhat over 4 per cent of the total number of symbols in the press referring to American place names. The average issue from 1771 to 1775 contained almost 22 collective self-referent symbols, an increase of over 3200 per cent over the 1735-39 period. During the last five colonial years the press devoted about one-quarter of its news space to collective symbols, another quarter to symbols of place names in the colonies publishing the individual journals and about one-half of its space to symbols of place names in other colonies. In sum, a concept that was extremely marginal in the late 1730s was quite salient by the early 1770s.

The process by which the salience of the collective concept for the colonial press increased was cyclical. As may be seen in Table 1, the number of collective self-referent symbols per issue fluctuated considerably during the 41 years from 1735 to 1775. The low points of the cycles occurred in 1736 (or possibly earlier), 1745, 1761 and 1772; the peaks were in 1740, 1756, 1769 and 1775 (or later). Two points are of interest here. First, the peaks of the cycles no less than the troughs were on increasingly higher planes as time passed. Second, in general the cycles were of increasingly shorter duration. Thus, despite fluctuations in the curve, the secular trend in the use of collective self-referent symbols was clearly climbing upward at an ever greater rate.

That the salience of the collective concept in the newspapers rose is of course no indication that the colonists were becoming ever more "nationalistic." It is possible that they could merely have been stressing their allegiance to the British political community more often. As it turns out, however, such was not the case. For the period as a whole about six in ten collective self-referent symbols (58 per cent) identified the colonies or colonists either implicitly or explicitly as American. Again the propensity to use American self-referent symbols rose: from roughly 43 per cent in 1735-39 to about 63 per cent in 1771-75. In no year after 1755 did less than 50 per cent of these symbols identify the land and people as American rather than British.

Collective self-referent symbols referring to the people appeared in the newspapers far less frequently than did those referring to the land. In fact the latter outnumbered the former by more than five to one. In only one year (1760) before 1765 did the average issue refer collectively to the colo-

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nists at least once; the ensuing decade found each newspaper printing an average of 3.7 such symbols, reaching a high point of 10.9 in 1775, the year in which fighting broke out between the Americans and the Redcoats.

It was not until the years after 1764 that the distinction between "His Majesty's subjects" or "British colonists" and "Americans" became a real one in the colonial press. Before then the newspapers were all but unanimous (97.1 per cent) in identifying the colonists with the British political community. By far the most popular terms during these 29 years were those identifying the colonists as subjects of the British Crown—"His Majesty's subjects," "His Majesty's colonists," and, after 1756, the regimental name "Royal Americans"—which together comprised 108 (or 79.4 per cent) of the total of 136 symbols. From 1764 to 1775 almost six in ten (57.0 per cent) of the collective self-referent symbols identified the colonial people as American rather than as British. But even during this period the relative paucity of symbols resulted in wide fluctuations in the distribution of symbols from year to year. If the data for these 12 years are fitted to a linear trend line, however, a clear picture of changing perceptions emerges. The average increase in the use of symbols identifying the colonists as American was 2.3 percentage points per year. The threshold of self-conscious or explicit "Americanism," an imaginary 50 per cent line, was crossed in 1770, although it is true that there were two years before that date when the curve was above the 50 per cent level, and at least two years after 1770 when it was below the halfway mark. (By way of comparison, the linear trend line for symbols identifying the land as American rose 0.8 percentage points per year from 1735 to 1775 and crossed the 50 per cent threshold in 1762, thus suggesting that the perception of the land as being a part of an American rather than a British community clearly preceded a similar perception of the inhabitants of that land.)

As far as newspapers from the individual colonies are concerned, there were some marked differences in their presentation of an image of the American community. The New England prints—the Tory *Massachusetts Gazette* from 1735 to 1764 and, after its level of "Americanism" slipped somewhat, the patriot *Boston Gazette* from 1765 to 1775—led in this respect; the journals of the middle colonies (the *New-York Weekly Journal*, the *New-York Mercury* and the *Pennsylvania Gazette*) lagged until the 1760s; and the southern newspapers (the *Virginia Gazette* and the *South-Carolina Gazette*), after an initial period of rather high awareness of an American political community, seemed to draw closer in their symbol usage to the British political community in the two decades between 1745 and 1764. With the passage of time the individual newspapers not only became more aware of the collective concept, as indicated by the inclusion

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of an ever larger number of collective self-referent symbols in their columns, but their choice of symbols tended to become quite steady and congruent. Not until the early 1760s, however, did the newspapers of the middle colonies join with the New England prints in a symbol revolution that preceded the outbreak of fighting by more than a decade.

These findings are suggestive of the value of symbol analysis for putting events or specific statements of individuals into a larger time perspective. It becomes clear, for instance, that the "Americanism" that appeared during the War of Jenkins' Ear was not without precedent. Nor did a spirit of American nationalism strike the colonists like a bolt from the blue during the French and Indian War. That spirit was already there. Similarly, the newspapers, which at once reflected and helped to shape the images of the politically relevant strata of colonial society, revealed an upsurge in sentiments of American community during the 1760s. The point, however, is not that such a trend emerged for the first time during the conflicts of that decade. The trend already existed. The crises of the 1760s merely accelerated the pace of that trend toward symbolic separation from the British political community. In short, the changing processes of symbolic identification in the American colonies seem to have been neither revolutionary nor evolutionary in the strictest sense of these terms. Rather, like other learning situations, they were both gradual and fitful, with a few periods of extremely rapid advances (or breakthroughs) interspersed with other periods of more or less mild relapses. Symbol analysis gives us a useful means to examine this process by which the colonists learned to be Americans.

Afternote

The above study is a companion piece to my book, *Symbols of American Community, 1735–1775* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1966). I have seen no work directly related to it in the field of colonial American history. The basic concepts and methodology of the article are being used in works in progress on movements toward African unity, European integration and the Negro movement in the South.

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THE FREQUENCY OF COLLECTIVE SELF-REFERENT SYMBOLS IN THE COLONIAL PRESS, 1735-1775

Note: For easier visualization the data are on a semi-logarithmic graph.

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The 31 selections in this book are reprinted from **American Quarterly** and appear here with authors' afternotes written for this edition. Speaking from a variety of disciplines as broad as American Studies itself, the contributors discuss the character of the land, the people, and the historical experience of America.

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